













RELIGION IN THE REICH



# REICH

By

MICHAEL POWER

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.  
LONDON · NEW YORK · TORONTO

*First Published 1939*

## FOREWORD

THERE has probably been no more curious persecution in history than the attack made by National-Socialism in Germany upon the Christian Churches. It has been different not only in degree but in kind from the State suppression of organized Jewry; and while its course has not been reported to the same extent (because there has not been the same physical cruelty) its effects may, in time, be even more appalling. It may seriously weaken the whole structure of Christianity in Europe.

The extent of the attack is not realized in Britain: and its very existence is still categorically denied in Berlin. It is therefore important that every effort should be made to acquaint Christians outside Germany of the still half-hidden story of the past seven years.

The following brief account is as far as possible an objective report, based largely on personal visits to the Reich, but aided to a great degree by certain excellent books that have appeared on the subject. Of these, two are outstanding—*Catholiques d'Allemagne*, by Robert d'Harcourt, which has now been translated into English, and *The Struggle for Religious Freedom in Germany*, by the Dean of Chichester. To

both of these I owe a debt of gratitude. In addition, authenticated reports from the *Universe* and *The Tablet* have supplemented personal experience, and to both these papers, as well as to the files of *The Times*, an acknowledgement is due.

Although this account has had to be written in the shadow of war, a sincere attempt has been made to give the National-Socialist view as well as that of the Churches. Without an understanding of the Party reasons for expending so much energy on Church matters, it is impossible to see the struggle in proportion.

It must, finally, be realized that the whole sorry business is based on a gigantic misunderstanding—namely, the conviction of the National-Socialist Party that a new German Faith, putting Blood and Soil before Christian dogma yet calling itself Christian, is compatible with fundamental Protestant and Catholic belief.

To all those men and women in Germany, Protestant and Catholic, who have been made to suffer material and spiritual distress for the sake of the Cross, this brief report is humbly dedicated.

## CONTENTS

### PART I

#### CATHOLIC GERMANY

CHAP.	PAGE
I. "MEINE EHRE HEISST TREU"	3
II. THE FIRST SALVO . . . . .	12
III. THE PEACE THAT FAILED . . . . .	26
IV. 1933 — CATHOLICISM TURNS THE OTHER CHEEK . . . . .	36
V. THE STRUGGLE FOR YOUTH . . . . .	47
VI. 1935-1936: "SMUGGLERS AND PER- VERTS" . . . . .	62
VII. VATICAN THUNDER. . . . .	74
VIII. THE NATIONALIST-SOCIALIST'S REPLY	88

### PART II

#### PROTESTANT GERMANY

IX. POST-WAR PROTESTANTISM . . . . .	99
X. ENTER THE REICHSBISCHOF . . . . .	107
XI. EXIT THE REICHSBISCHOF . . . . .	118
XII. DR. KERRL IN CHARGE . . . . .	135
XIII. THE NATIONAL-SOCIALIST'S REPLY . . . . .	147



PART III  
CATHOLIC AUSTRIA

CHAP.	PAGE
XIV. AUSTRIA SURRENDERS . . .	159
XV. THE RAPE OF THE SCHOOLS . .	170
XVI. PERSECUTION . . . . .	181
XVII. PRISON . . . . .	194
XVIII. AUSTRIA: 1939 . . . . .	204
XIX. THE NATIONAL-SOCIALIST'S REPLY .	216
XX. "ET VERITAS MANET IN AETERNUM"	224

•

**PART I**

**CATHOLIC GERMANY**

•



# I

## “MEINE EHRE HEISST TREU”

OVER the gate of Berchtesgaden is inscribed in capitals the single sentence: “Meine Ehre Heisst Treu”—My Honour Abides in Good Faith.

This is neither cynicism nor sarcasm. It is a motto with a meaning. And any attempt either to condone or to condemn National-Socialism's attitude towards the Christian churches is futile that does not at least try to understand the Führer's interpretation of Good Faith.

It was during the early days of his prison life that Hitler began to write down his faith for all the world to see: his faith in a resurrected Germany, in a Germany free from Jewry, Communism, vice, effeminacy, treason and the disintegrating forces of moderation. He dreamt of a new Germany that would be strong enough to rule the world, purged of all those elements to which he ascribed her defeat in war. Because democratic government made for hesitation, disunity and delay, democratic government would have to go. Because Jewry put cash before glory, because Communism put a hopeless idealism before either, Communism must be killed

and Jewry driven out. There could be, and must be, only one thought: one single driving force uniting Germans of all faiths and classes and driving them towards that solitary goal—the resurrection of the German race. This was the faith, the Good Faith, to which Hitler once vowed himself in *Mein Kampf*.

Its implications, even then, stretched out in a variety of directions. In politics he saw clearly that it involved, or might involve, the repudiation of treaties. Towards Communism it might necessitate a counter-doctrine of even greater violence. Against Jewry it would demand measures that the civilized world might condemn. But none of these things mattered. The Good Faith, like any other great faith, must be uncompromising. It must fight, as Christianity had fought, with the sword. If force were necessary, force must be used: if lies were required, they must be brought into service.

It is all laid down—though less with reference to religion than to politics—in that extraordinary book. There was no country, no sect, no political tendency that was not given full warning of what was to be attempted.

Moreover he probably knew then—for he sees things more clearly than other men—that only one force was likely to upset his monumental ambition. Brought up in a Catholic country, he must have known that his tremendous plan flew in the face of

Christianity, and could only be attained by the use of a principle fundamentally un-Christian. He must therefore have found himself threatened by something stronger than Jewry, more deeply instilled than Communism, more lasting than democracy: sooner or later he would have to ask Germany to deny the Sermon on the Mount.

His solution, in the circumstances, was the only possible one: National-Socialism must be a new religion that would supersede the old. Organized international Christianity must be changed to an even better organized, German Christianity. Any direct attack upon the Churches must be made either in the name of Christ, or of Germany. As a German, he realized the futility of attacking faith and idealism, as such, in a nation naturally religious. The problem resolved itself into harnessing this vast power to his own political machine.

. . . . .

When he reached power, Germany had a population of some 65,000,000. Of these 40,000,000 were Evangelicals. The three great Protestant divisions were the United Prussian, the Lutheran and the Reformed Churches. Protestantism, as a result of the old territorial laws whereby the Prince could choose for himself the official faith of his subjects, was still divided up into twenty-eight

*Landeskirchen.* The Weimar Republic, which in 1919 had decreed absolute freedom of faith and conscience throughout Germany, had so far not greatly changed the old geographical boundaries of the various sects. By far the greatest and most powerful body inside the Evangelical fold was the United Prussian Church, with 20,000,000 adherents. The various Free Churches, though numerically almost negligible, had been growing in numbers and spirit and adding to a general disunity inside the Protestant Church. Attempts to bring the various denominations together had hopelessly failed. Since the war, rationalists, free thinkers and socialists had attacked all forms of organized religion with some success. Long before Hitler came to power a rather nebulous "positive Christianity," a belief in Germany before everything else, had been preached as a substitute for the Christianity of the Old Testament. Of the 40,000,000 members of the various Protestant denominations, less than half went regularly to any church.

Of the remaining 25,000,000, slightly more than 21,000,000 were Roman Catholic. Only 2,000,000 were openly without religion of any kind, or actively atheist. Non-Aryans, even at that time, were subscribing to the various forms of Christianity. There was a large number of small sects outside both the Protestant and Catholic Churches, but none of them was sufficiently strong or well-organized to be

worth the consideration of the new Party when it achieved power.

Religion of any kind is mentioned only once in the Twenty-Five Points of the National-Socialist Party Programme. The 24th Point explicitly states:

*"We demand religious freedom for all denominations, so long as they do not endanger the stability of the State or offend against the German people's instincts of morality and decency. The Party as such takes its stand on a positive Christianity, without committing itself to any particular creed. It combats the materialist-Jewish spirit within and without, and is convinced that a permanent recovery of our people is possible only from within and must be based on the principle of the Common Interest before Self Interest."*

Put into plainer language this came to mean: "The Protestant Churches, disunited and unorganized, must submit to a state authority which for the good of Germany can impose its will upon the Bishops: and under this State authority they must be united in a single German Protestant Church. The Catholic Church, united and well-organized, must give up once and for all its allegiance to a man in Rome and become a single German Catholic Church. Protestant and Catholic together, united in their devotion to Germany, must be educated up to that Positive Christianity demanded by the Party programme, and work in harmony under



the will and guidance of the rulers of the Reich."

The Party leaders to this day interpret this as merely meaning that the Churches must be educated in loyalty to the State, and that there has been no persecution of any kind beyond punishment for treachery. But to the Church leaders the demands of National-Socialism involved treachery to the deepest principles of their Faith, and they claim that as a result there has been a persecution more malignant and more powerful than Europe has known for centuries.

. . . . .

Counting on promises made during the Party's rise to power, Protestant and Catholic leaders alike welcomed Hitler's success in January 1933.

From that moment until the present day there has been an unceasing struggle. Neither side can claim the victory. Each has suffered its defeats. In the name of Christianity, organized religion is still attacked throughout Germany. The struggle, if it is to be seen clearly, must be seen for what it is: not a fight between Church and State, but a drawn-out battle between two religions.

National-Socialism is a faith as much as a programme. It could not otherwise have succeeded. Germans, as much as anyone else, have an intense need of religious satisfaction. In their post-war agony and bewilderment, the National-Socialist

ideal offered something that was at the same time tangible and mystic. The Party even surrounds itself with all the ritualism for which the Catholic Church is criticized; and does not hesitate to speak, when necessary, of its divine mission, of the hand of God working through the Führer, of the "worship" of Blood and Soil, and the purity of the race. This aspect of National-Socialism is too often nowadays lost sight of: yet it must be remembered that it was precisely this part of the Programme, this insistence upon a new and more glorious Christianity, which in the early days drew millions to its side and helped in an enormous measure to swell the votes that gave it absolute power.

Hitler still claims publicly that he has not attacked Christianity: he has only tried to put it right. He has tried to cure it of its greatest fault—that it was not sufficiently German. This view represents the basis of the whole struggle. When he claims that he has not closed a single church in the Alt Reich, he speaks the truth. When he says that he has never interfered with the form of a church service, he speaks the truth. The gulf lies in this: that he asks Germany to go to church in the name of a new Christianity which far from being an improvement on the old is a blasphemous parody of it: a parody in which he plays the part of the Holy Ghost, and the Crucifix itself is censored.

In the event, the attack upon the Churches has

taken three forms which must be considered separately.

First, the attack upon the Catholic Church in an attempt to wean it from Rome, involving the discrediting of the clergy by all available means and the throttling of Catholic education.

Second, the attack on the Protestant Church, involving an attempt at coercive unity under the State, the stifling of all criticism, the end of personal interpretation of the Bible, and the obedience of the clergy to a *Reichsbischof*.

Third, the attack upon the Catholic Church in Austria, which has taken a far more violent form than the other two—under the excuse of finding more “dangerous” conditions—and must be considered on its own merits as distinct from the struggles which preceded it.

It is however imperative to understand the appalling paradox that hangs like a shadow over all three struggles: that this persecution of Christianity has been accomplished in God’s name. Never at any time was it fundamentally a fight between Church and State, it was much more an attempt to graft a new faith on to an old. Hitler does not feel that he has tried to drive Christianity out of Germany: he feels only that he has tried to make Christianity German. National-Socialism, which claims the “totality” of the soul, would not have been logical if it had not demanded the submission of the old faith to the new.

That too is the meaning and the logic of the words that hang over the gate at Berchtesgaden: My Honour Abides in Good Faith.

. . . . .

## II

### THE FIRST SALVO

CATHOLICISM and the Party first came to grips in September 1930, nearly two and a half years before the Party obtained power. On the 30th of that month, through the voice of a parish priest, the two great forces at work in Germany found themselves for the first time set clearly and unequivocally one against the other.

Just a fortnight earlier, on September 14, more than six million Germans had voted National-Socialist and had sent 107 deputies to the Reichstag. Intelligent people woke up with a start and wondered what the country was coming to. Millions of others pretended that the vote had no particular significance. The powerful Centre Party, Catholic in spirit and in outlook, which had previously looked upon Hitler's escapades and campaigns as the passing gyrations of a disgruntled revolutionary, stirred uneasily beneath their professional calm. Mothers of families asked their husbands whether they thought the new Party would come to anything, and the husbands shrugged their shoulders and were not quite sure.

One man was sure. On that Sunday morning the parish priest of the small borough of Kirschausen,

in Hesse, got up in his pulpit and answered the unspoken anxiety of his congregation in a sermon which defined the attitude of the Church towards the published doctrines of National-Socialism in so far as they affected Catholic teaching.

He then made three points.

First, no Catholic could honourably as a Catholic be a member of the Nazi Party.

Second, it was not permitted for the members of the Party as such to take part in the religious ceremonies of the Church.

Third, no fully fledged Party member, bound by its tenets and active in its interests, would be allowed to the Sacraments.

The parish priest got down from his pulpit, and Mass continued. He had said all that there was to be said on the matter. He had directed his congregation on the attitude that the Church expected of them, and told them simply where their duty lay.

*“Credo in unum Deum, Patrem Omnipotentem. . .”*

If National-Socialism was uncompromising, with a single aim, so also was the Catholic Church.

. . . . .

Within twenty-four hours the matter had been taken up, The Gauleiter of Hesse went to the Bishop and demanded a more amenable definition of the correct Catholic attitude.

Through his Vicar-General the Bishop of Mainz

replied: " It was I who directed the priest, in answer to questions he put to me concerning the Church's attitude to the N.S.D.A.P. I am forced to give him such directions because the programme of the N.S.D.A.P. contains articles irreconcilable with the Catholic doctrine, and in particular Article 24 which no Catholic could subscribe to without disowning essential points of his own faith."

In an open letter he dealt fully with the reasons why Article 24 was not acceptable to Catholicism. He condemned the racial theory. Finally he repeated the three questions which the parish priest had put to him—

1. Can a Catholic be an active enrolled member of the Hitler Party?

2. Is a Catholic priest authorized to allow members of the Hitler Party to take part collectively at such ceremonies of the Church as burial?

3. Can a Catholic, adhering in full to the principles of the Party, be allowed to the Sacraments?

"To these three questions," concluded the Bishop, " we must answer—No."<sup>1</sup>

. . . . .

That first salvo, those three tremendous " No's " thundered through Germany. Their first echoes were to be found in pastoral letters read to the faithful throughout the country during the autumn and winter of that year. The well-organized Catholic

<sup>1</sup> *Catholiques d'Allemagne*, by Robert d'Harcourt, p. 17

Youth Movements were told that they could not join any Hitler organization without betraying the principles of their Church. Congregations were instructed anew in the principles of Catholicism.

In February 1931, eight Bishops of Bavaria together signed a declaration putting the Catholic view more clearly and concisely than it has ever been put in the long struggle since. They felt it their duty to draw the attention of the faithful to the doctrinal errors of National-Socialism, but dissociated themselves from any criticism of its politics. They pointed to five matters in which the Party beliefs cut across Catholic doctrine.

1. The racial theory puts race before religion.
2. It rejects Old Testament revelation, and even the Decalogue.
3. It does not admit the Primacy of the Pope, on the ground that the Papacy constitutes an authority "outside the Reich."
4. It supports the plan of a German National Church "freed of dogma."
5. Article 24 claims to erect a "moral sentiment" of the German race as the criterion of the Christian moral law.

"The Church," they said, "must conclude that what National Socialism calls Christianity is not the Christianity of Christ."

The Bishops further forbade the clergy to take part in the Movement under any form whatsoever,



and admonished them to make clear to their congregations how National-Socialism, originally a political opponent of Bolshevism, had gradually developed a cultural basis hostile to all Christian teaching. In the matter of the Sacraments, priests were asked to distinguish between mere "adherents" to the Movement, and active participators in it. Collective participation in church service of Party units in uniform, was forbidden.

This declaration defined once and for all, one would have thought, the position of the Catholic hierarchy in relation to the Hitler Party. While asking the priests to avoid references to the purely political side of National-Socialism, it plainly enjoins on them the duty of explaining to their congregations the cultural and anti-Christian basis of the whole Party programme. Surely that was clear enough?

Books on this subject so far for the most part carefully avoid the famous sermon at Kirschausen, or the repercussions of it that shook all Germany before Hitler came to power. Yet when a proper history of the subject comes to be written, it must somehow be explained how the Church, so wonderfully sure of itself in 1930, could welcome the regime in 1933. A short memory? An ingenuous belief in promises? An elastic conscience? The desire for peace? Fear? A mixture of all these things, or none of them?

From 1934 onwards the visitor to Germany could

see men in the Party uniform at the Communion rails. In 1935 and 1936 I still remember sermons praising the regime and asking for Catholic support of it. Millions of Catholics had helped to vote Hitler into power, and millions helped him to hold it. All these things cannot be glossed over: they are a part of the extraordinary story. They have got to be told, and one day they will have to be explained: just as someone, some day, will have to tell why and how it was that an Austrian Cardinal, with five years of Catholic struggle in Germany already over, could as head of the Church in Austria welcome to that country the regime that had done so much to suffocate the Church in Germany.

It is a point that must not be forgotten—that without Catholic help the Party could never have attained power so soon.

Opinions differ as to the actual strength of Catholicism in Germany during the years that Hitler rose to power.

Externally, it had the appearance of tremendous strength. Unlike German Protestantism, it was unified. In the Reichstag, the Centre Party, very largely Catholic, enjoyed genuine power. Catholic Youth was not only well-equipped materially, but so well organized that it incurred criticism as well as jealousy. Indeed the whole laity was provided with such a network of organizations and associations

that the irreverent were tempted to wonder how the Bishops spent their time, or ever found anything to do.

Under the Weimar Republic, by Article 135 of the Constitution of August 11, 1919, "full freedom of faith and conscience" was guaranteed to every member of the Reich. Released from the restrictions it had suffered under the Hohenzollerns, Catholicism played a tremendous part in post-war Germany. It was a genuinely national force in political matters. In favour of attempting to fulfil the obligations imposed by the Treaty of Versailles (one of the things for which Hitler has never forgiven it) it represented effectively a form of Conservative moderation and decency still dear to millions of Germans no longer audible in the handling of their country's affairs. There was, for the first time, a Nuncio, Pacelli, in Berlin. The 20,000,000 Catholics—one third of the entire population—were not merely well-organized: they were united, and they practised their religion. The clergy were efficient, and numerous. For instance in 1927-28 there were 20,410 priests for the twenty million Catholics, while Protestantism, with 40,000,000 followers, had only 16,244 pastors. Since 1918, 1,340 new centres of monastic life had arisen. Organizations such as the Children of Mary had 800,000 members. Nearly all the great organizations had their own newspaper by means of which millions of Catholics

were kept in active touch with Church activities. There were nearly twelve thousand parishes. Although the mainly Catholic parts of Germany were and are Bavaria and the Rhineland, there were strong Catholic outposts—for instance in Berlin, where there were 440,000 Catholics when Hitler came to power. Catholicism had benefited, not suffered, from the post-war unrest and search for truth. It was powerful, well-organized, and respected. Whatever final judgment may be passed on the part it was to play from 1933 onwards, no-one can pretend that it began those years either weak or unprepared.

The Hitler Party, between 1930 and 1933, was perfectly well aware that this organized, growing Catholicism, unless properly handled, might be the one insuperable obstacle in its race for power. Their treatment of the "Catholic question" during those three years is of the greatest significance in view of subsequent events.

. . . . .

Remember that they had come to grips in 1930, and that by the spring of 1931 the positions of the two sides were already clearly defined. The Bavarian Bishops had categorically denounced the cultural basis of National-Socialism, and, indeed, a member of the Party had been refused Christian burial. Nazi deputies and the Nazi press had on their side long ago hurled the first abusive bricks

at the Catholic hierarchy. The challenge had been thrown out, and accepted.

As far back as February 1930, Alfred Rosenberg, a man in whom blood far from Nordic is apparently excused, had written and published the second most important book of modern Germany. Of the *Mythus of the Twentieth Century*, the publishers said at the time: "A grandiose race-psychological survey which offers us a quite overwhelming wealth of insight and knowledge in the domain of human history, religion and civilization from a human standpoint."

In the domain of religion this man's wealth of insight permitted him to reject the Old Testament lock, stock and barrel. "What one calls the Old Testament," he said, "should be crossed off the list of books of religious education."

German Honour becomes the new religion. "National Honour is for us the beginning and end of all thought and of all action. It can tolerate no equal motive force beside itself, neither Christian love nor the Freemason's humanity nor Roman Philosophy." (p. 514.)

A new German People's Church, built upon German Honour, having cast aside the Old Testament with its "tales of souteneurs and cattle-coupers," must proclaim a Germanic Christ who is a "self-confident Master," not a sorrowing Jew. There must be no "Lamb of God," but the "teach-

ing spirit of fire." Even "the ideal of love for one's neighbour must be subordinated to the idea of national honour." (p. 608.)

In his yearning for the purity of the race, Rosenberg points out that the Catholic Church must be killed. Roman Catholicism he describes as "an ossification of the German peoples," and the Papacy as a fetish. In actual fact, he declares, Catholics care nothing for Christ: their one ambition is power for the Church. Germany must therefore shake herself free of this oriental influence, and "by demolishing the intellectual degeneracies of Syria and Asia Minor," raise the new, the lasting glories of Blood and Soil. "Nordic blood represents the mystery which has conquered and replaced the ancient Sacraments."

Two corollaries of this resurrection are significant: first, "Law (*Recht*) is what Aryan men consider right. . . . What serves German honour is the one and only law." (p. 591.) Second, school teaching must be taken out of the hands of the Churches, for "freedom of teaching in every direction" is only dangerous. "The symbol of organic truth to-day is indisputably the black Swastika."

Rosenberg discards the Crucifix, the Sermon on the Mount, and Charity: but he will not have it that he has discarded Christianity. His vast, muddled book, over 700 pages long, strikes the key-note of the National-Socialist attack upon the Church by

again emphasizing that the Party, far from advocating a straightforward atheism, cloaks itself instead in a woolly mixture of mysticism and arrogance. He calls his Blood and Soil hypothesis the very centre of a "positive Christianity." He swears that he does not want to sweep away the figure of Christ: he only wants to improve it.

This book immediately enjoyed a vast success. It is true that at the time Rosenberg held no high office in the Party itself, but the book was known to have the Führer's approval, and Rosenberg was in fact the editor already of the Party's official organ, the *Völkischer Beobachter*. As the minor Bible of Party followers the book is immensely important. Even then, between 1930 and 1933, one aspect of it—its insistence upon nationalism—set the pace for the Party's tactics against the Church. From 1930 to 1933 the Church was attacked upon the best ground that the Party could have chosen in order to make an impression on the German people—it was attacked on the ground that it was foreign, anti-German.

Followers of the Churches were made to believe that they somehow betrayed their Fatherland by doing so. The clergy were depicted as an international set serving interests other than those of their country. German pride was appealed to when the *Völkischer Beobachter* poured scorn on a religion that could take its orders from an Italian in Rome.

The Party press then began agitating for a "German" clergy, and for ecclesiastical unity under the German banner. Germanism was already the clearly-defined religion of the Party—Christ himself, after all, had been proved by Rosenberg to have been of German stock. The Churches hitherto had failed because they were soft with age-old Judaism, and weakened by the pale waters of internationalism. In the press, Catholics were soon finding themselves referred to as "Unworthy Germans," as "pacifist traitors," and eventually as "birds who foul their own nest." This last epithet was publicly applied to a Catholic priest, Fr. Stratmann, then living in Berlin.

Through that entire period, 1930-1933, the same note was struck over and over again in the increasingly powerful Party organs. "To vote for the Centre is to Vote Red!" warned the *Beobachter*. "It was the Catholics who believed in Versailles!" screamed the headlines.

Catholics themselves became divided. There were those who fought outright against a Party that had the impudence to hope that it could impose an *Ersatz* Christ for the true Christ Who had died on the Cross: but equally there was an increasing number of Catholics who began wondering whether after all the Church had not been a little weak in the resurrection of Germany. And now here was a Party that not only promised to make



Germany great again, but looked as if it could do it. Catholicism was surely strong enough to look after itself under any regime.

Millions, too, sincerely thought that the time had come to choose between Hitler and Communism; and the Pope's feelings about Communism were well-known. Might it not be worth while giving Hitler's men a chance? At least they seemed prepared to get things done. And if they made a hash of things, why, the Centre Party would soon bring them to their senses!

The Catholic votes grew. Young Catholics began to join the Movement, for their country's sake. Church protests died away.

There had been a certain genius about the National-Socialist handling of the Catholic question during those three last preparatory years. They made no pretence of loving the Church. No-one can accuse them of having wooed her! You do not lull the German into drowsy acquiescence with soft words and sweet music: you shout, you make defiant gestures, you appeal to patriotism, you promise the clink of steel. The Party knew these things as well then as they know them to-day. In two and a half years they changed official, public categorical antagonism on the part of organized Catholicism into a silent, even hopeful, assent. And they had never ceased to insult her.

Miracle is an odd word to use, perhaps, but it is hard otherwise to describe the astonishing victory that National-Socialism in those years won over organized religion. The *Beobachter* had been as honest as *Mein Kampf*. In September 1930 the voice of the parish priest of Kirschausen had rung through Germany, and the hierarchy had condemned with an unmistakable voice the heresies of the Hitler Party. In January 1933 Hitler assumed full powers, hailed with relief by practising Catholics, with genuine pleasure by the Protestants.

The curtain rose upon the first act of a drama that has dragged its way through six astonishing years. The prologue had been wild in contradiction and surprise—and yet that was nothing to the plot about to be unfolded.

Within a matter of months the vast façade of organized Catholicism—so carefully built, so apparently unshakable—was to crumble, and all its outward magnificence was to be swept away. The “shifters” of this tremendous scene were already waiting in the wings.

I have often wondered what were the real feelings of the parish priest of Kirschausen as he watched the curtain rise on the first act of the play—the signing, by von Papen and Pacelli, of the Concordat which was to settle once and for all the differences between Hitler and the Vatican.

### III

#### THE PEACE THAT FAILED

NEGOTIATIONS for the Concordat had begun in April between Cardinal Pacelli, as he then was, Secretary of State at the Holy See, and Franz von Papen, the Catholic Vice-Chancellor of Germany. By a curious irony it had been found impossible to conclude such a Concordat during the years that the Centre Party held so much power: yet the new Concordat was signed within six months of the advent of National-Socialism.

There were three Concordats already in existence—with Bavaria, Prussia and Baden. The new Concordat recognized the three previous ones, and gathered them at the same time into its own structure.

The Concordat of 1933 was an agreement between the Reich and the Vatican whereby each promised, to put it vulgarly, to keep off the other's grass. That is to say the State promised absolute protection for Catholic education, complete freedom of religious practise, and no interference whatever with Church affairs. In exchange, the Church promised to take no further part in the political development of the Reich, and even swore allegiance to the State.

This meant, of course, the end of the Centre Party.

Both sides expressed themselves satisfied with the new arrangement.

Von Papen is said to have been genuinely anxious to see the end of political Catholicism, and there were many Catholics who agreed with him. There was a growing feeling that it was perhaps time the Bishops occupied themselves more closely with the flocks committed to their care. Further, misgivings caused by Rosenberg's teachings, and by acts of violence against Catholics which had already occurred between January and July, made some kind of safeguard for Catholic education imperative. To that extent it suited Catholicism as much as it suited Hitler to have a strong line drawn between religion and politics. In Rome it was felt that not only had a genuine protection for Catholic youth, and the practise of the faith in Germany, been achieved by the Concordat, but that it had also raised yet another defence against Bolshevism. When the Concordat was signed, on July 20, 1933, it was considered a great day in the history of the Church.

Hitler regarded it as an even greater day in the history of the new German State. It was his first diplomatic coup. It made him respectable in the eyes of the world. If other nations chose to regard his rush to power as the diplomatically unrecogniz-

able triumph of a mere revolutionary, he could point to the fact that his first act had been to make peace with the world's greatest spiritual power. Internally, too, it meant the end, by implication, of the Centre Party as a Catholic force: and the Concordat, would, he hoped, be more than a mere sop to the Church—it would keep its mouth shut.

Both sides were therefore pleased with the bargain that had been made. Signed on July 20, it was ratified a few weeks later, on September 10.

As it became in a sense the battleground over which the struggle was to be fought, it is important to know clearly its exact terms.

By Article 1, "The German Reich guarantees the freedom of creed and of public worship to the Catholic religion. It acknowledges the right of the Catholic Church—within the limits of the law of the land—to administer its own affairs and to make laws and regulations binding upon its membership within the jurisdiction of the Church."

The second article recognizes the three previous Concordats, and Article 3 gives the Vatican the right to send a Nuncio to Berlin.

Articles 4-15 protect the clergy and the conventual orders, although asking that all priests should be Germans with a German education. "The Holy See enjoys complete freedom in its correspondence with the Bishops, the clergy, and the other membership of the Catholic Church in

Germany" (Art. 4). The salaries of clergymen are made exempt from confiscation, nor can clergymen be questioned by judicial authorities concerning facts "confided to them in the exercise of their spiritual guidance." Catholic parishes, bishoprics, conventual orders and religious fraternities, as well as the institutions, foundations and properties of the Catholic Church, retain "the status of public corporations under the general law." By Article 15: "Conventual orders and religious associations save for the special provisions of the paragraph following, are not subject to restrictions on the part of the State, either regarding their number, selection of their members, activity in spiritual service, education, care of the sick, and charitable work, or in the management of their affairs and the administration of their property."

Then comes Article 16, of which most Catholics in England are totally unaware—though to the Reich it was to be the keystone of the whole Concordat. It reads as follows:

"Before the Bishops take possession of their dioceses, they are to take an oath of fealty either to the national representative in the states, or the President in the Reich, respectively, according to the following formula:

" 'Before God and on the Holy Gospels I swear and promise—as becomes a Bishop—loyalty to the German Reich and to the . . . state. I swear and

promise to honour the constitutional government and to cause the clergy of my diocese to honour it. In the performance of my spiritual office and in my solicitude for the welfare and interest of the German state, I will try to avoid every detrimental act which might endanger it'."

We must return to that later.

Other "critical" clauses of the Concordat include No. 17, by which all property and rights of the Church in Germany are secured, No. 19—"The Catholic theological faculties in the state schools will remain"—and Article 21, under which "Catholic instruction in the grammar, high, trade and continuation schools is a regular part of the curriculum and is taught in accordance with the principles of the Catholic Church. . . . The church authorities have the right to investigate whether the pupils are receiving religious instruction in accordance with the teachings and requirements of the Church, the opportunities for such investigation to be agreed on with the school authorities."

Articles 23, 24, 25 appear to clinch the safety and integrity of Catholic teaching. The first of these explicitly states: "The retention and establishment of Catholic schools remains secure." Article 24 ensures Catholic teachers for Catholic grammar schools, and by Article 26 orders and communities are entitled to "establish and conduct" private schools of their own.

Article 31, over the interpretation of which such bitterness was soon to be expended, begins: "Such Catholic organizations and associations as serve a purely religious, cultural or charitable purpose, and as such are subject to the church authorities, will be protected in their establishments and activities.

"Catholic organizations and associations which serve in addition to the religious, cultural or charitable purposes, social or professional objectives, shall, without prejudice to civil bodies of a similar character, enjoy the protection of Article 31, Paragraph 1, in so far as they guarantee that their activity lies outside any political party. . . ."

The final paragraph of the Article reads: "In so far as the Reich and the states sponsor athletic or other young people's organizations, care will be taken that their members are enabled to fulfil their religious obligations on Sundays and holy days and that they are not encouraged to any acts not in accord with their religious and moral opinions and duties."

Article 32 echoes faintly the demands of Article 16. "In consideration of the special situation existing in Germany," it says, "and in view of the guaranty provided by this Concordat of legislation which will safeguard the rights and privileges of the Roman Catholic Church in the nation and its component states, the Holy See will prescribe regulations



which will prohibit clergymen and members of the conventual orders from membership in political parties and from working on their behalf."

Finally, by Article 33: "All matters appertaining to clerical persons or ecclesiastical affairs which have not been treated in the foregoing articles will be treated according to canonical law.

"Should differences of opinion arise regarding the interpretation of execution of any article of this Concordat, the Holy See and the German Reich will achieve a friendly solution in mutual agreement."

The Concordat could not have ended on a more suitable note of irony if it had tried.

It may be argued that in view of the fact that within a few months of the ratification of this Concordat, there was not one of its thirty-three Articles which did not lie shattered and ignored, there can only be a morbid and unhealthy curiosity in bringing it up. Yet this was after all to be the basis of a lasting peace between Church and State in Germany. The Vatican, at least, attached enormous importance to it. It was hailed publicly by the Führer as heralding at last "that peace between the government and the church which is so badly needed." To that document, twenty million Catholics pinned their hopes. And the subsequent measures taken by the Reich can only be seen clearly in perspective when one realizes how much the

State had promised in this solemn and formal agreement.

If there is little argument as to the extent to which it was violated by the Reich in 1933 and subsequent years, there still remains the questions posed by National-Socialists: did the Bishops not break the promise made by them in Article 16?

Had not the Bishops taken a solemn oath of loyalty to the German Reich? Yet the air was soon to be heavy with their condemnations. By this oath, they had promised to "cause their clergy to respect it"—yet there is no evidence that they did so.

What was in the Cardinal's mind as he read this Article over? "I swear and promise loyalty to the German Reich." The present Pope must have known something of the intentions of the Führer—he was in fact one of the few men who understood Germany really well. Since January, the attacks upon the Church had shown no sign of abating—rather had they increased in violence. There had been physical assaults. On July 14, six days before the signing of the Concordat, the Reich had passed a sterilization law that cut right across the doctrines of the Church. Its promulgation was temporarily held up: but its intention, its meaning, was a denial of the very basis of Catholic teaching. Rosenberg's doctrines, far from diminishing in popularity, were increasing: and the man himself was growing more powerful. That party whose Christianity the

Bavarian Bishops in 1930 had defined as "not the Christianity of Christ," was now in complete power, with its views on religion apparently unchanged. Yet, "before God and the Holy Gospels I swear and promise. . . ."

Perhaps it was a last attempt to make peace with iniquity: perhaps the safeguarding of Catholic youth was worth the State loyalty of the Bishops. History will have to unravel the motives and the searchings of mind that went to the building of that Article. The fact remains: six days after the signing of the Concordat, the State duly promulgated the Sterilization Law, which gave powers for sterilization, by force, even of the blind. Six days after the act of friendship, the State struck the Church in the face.

In the years to follow these blows were to continue: and the ordinary Catholic priest, whatever vow his Bishop may have taken, saw only his duty. It was true that he had been forbidden to meddle with politics: but it was politics that soon began to meddle with him. The State began to take over, in defiance of its promises, responsibilities that were his. He was entitled as a priest to defend the spiritual integrity of his flock and the Catholic education of its children. Those priests who in the years to come were to suffer imprisonment for "political Catholicism," for "abuse of the pulpit," must have suffered with their conscience clear.

Their vows as a priest rose far above any vow made to the State by their Bishop. But how, in the first place, did that astonishing clause find its way into the Concordat?

It is worth noting that in February 1938 it was officially denied in Berlin that the terms of the Concordat had ever been broken: and on January 30, 1939, Hitler himself proclaimed that he had not interfered in any way with the Church.

.

#### IV

### 1933—CATHOLICISM TURNS THE OTHER CHEEK

Robert d'Harcourt, in his brilliant study, *Catholiques d'Allemagne*, has alone of those who have so far tried to tell this amazing story, realized that there was something almost comic in the solemn questions posed by Mgr. Kaas—all arranged in alphabetical order running to the letter K—to Hitler on the Führer's assumption of authority at the end of January 1933. Heaven knows, Mgr. Kaas had every cause to be anxious for the Church; yet there is something about the methodical care of this prelate which raises a smile on the very threshold of tragedy. Amidst the thunder and lightning of Hitler's gigantic coup, Mgr. Kaas did not forget to put his questions in alphabetical order. Of all his doubts, two were fundamental: and these in turn boiled down to the one question—how far did the new Government propose to be constitutional? Hitler answered with the Reichstag Fire of February 27.

Hitler had achieved his ambition on January 30. On February 1 the Reichstag had been dissolved. The famous Centre Party was simply ignored. Its feebleness during this period—taking into account the power it had formerly enjoyed—is one of the

melancholy aspects of Catholic resistance during the early months of the new regime. Once again it was Bavaria that alone raised a voice of protest.

"Bavaria will never be a province of Prussia," cried Dr. Held on February 20. Two days later, from Munich, came the declaration: "A second Hitler-Putsch will receive here the same reception given it in 1923! Bavaria is ready." Another Bavarian voice, that of Lex, exclaimed: "We want no Brown Dictator. If they want to change our government, it will take more than three men and a corporal."

Brave words. But already, from the ashes of his tremendous fire, the corporal was building his dream, and Bavaria was powerless to prevent it. The elections of March 5 gave him 288 seats out of 647. The eighty-one seats gained by the Communists were simply wiped out as being "incompatible" with a national government.

What had happened to the Catholic vote?

The Bishops had given their instructions. Catholics were expected to vote for the Centre Party. They were to vote for it because the Hitler Party defied the Church, and aimed at a Christianity that was not the Christianity of Christ.

Yet of twelve and half million Catholic electors, only five and a half voted for the Centre Party.

If the story of these years is ever to be seen objectively, facts like those cannot be ignored. In the

crucial elections of March 1933 an actual majority of Catholic electors, defying the advice and exhortations of their clergy, helped Hitler to power. Six million Catholics preferred the promises of National-Socialism to the warnings of their own hierarchy. The period of contradictions, bewilderment and dismay had already opened.

On March 21, as if for the benefit of any Catholic still uncertain as to the official attitude to the Church, Hitler and Goebbels publicly refused to attend the solemn opening Mass at Potsdam. They were careful to underline this by giving as their reason that they considered it more important to lay wreaths on the tombs of S.A. men in Berlin.

Two days later, as if for the benefit of any Catholic now convinced that Hitler was against the Church, the Führer announced in the Reichstag: "The National Government sees in the two great Christian Confessions factors essential to the maintenance of the spirit of the German people. It will respect the contracts passed between it and the country, and will not encroach upon the Church's rights. Its one ambition is a spirit of peace between Church and State, and the religious education of the Confessions is assured. . . . We hope to develop favourably our relations with the Holy See."

The Centre Party, satisfied with these assurances, gave Hitler full powers through the voice of its President, Mgr. Kaas. A few days later the Arch-

bishop of Cologne authorized almost everything that the Bavarian Bishops in 1930 had forbidden—Party members were to be admitted to the Sacraments, even in organized bodies, and all restrictions on Party membership within the Church were wiped out. The Swastika was given the freedom of the centre aisle.

But during the spring the *Völkischer Beobachter* did not cease its virulent attacks. Goering himself, at Essen, declared that “*der Schwarze*,” the black man, the priest, was the Marxist’s collaborator in robbing the German house. “Catholicism, Social-Democracy, and Communism,” cried the *Beobachter*, “are united to bring about the ruin and death of Germany.”

Meanwhile von Papen had gone to Rome, to bring about the Concordat.

. . . . .

During the summer of 1933, the Catholic Church found itself in a turmoil. The power of the Centre Party was obviously at an end, although it did not die officially until July. Responsibility for leadership reverted to the Bishops.

They had an immensely difficult task. The conscience of the average Catholic was troubled. He had no idea where he stood. On the one hand he had had the assurances of his own hierarchy appealing to him to stand firm for the faith and vote against



the Hitler Party: and on the other he had the Government's assurances that the Church would not be harmed. On consecutive days he would hear of violent attacks upon Church institutions—and the progress of negotiations towards a Concordat in Rome. Goebbels announced the censorship of the press—and the Archbishop of Cologne threw his cathedral open to the Nazi Party.

No-one has yet done justice to the anxieties and worries of the ordinary practising Catholic during those months. His whole world was upside down. Promised something one day, he would receive news of the opposite the day following. Whatever the faults and failures of those who at that time were leaders of the Church, a great measure of sympathy is due to the ordinary, unremembered members of it—forced, by circumstances outside their own control, to steer a tortuous, impossible course through a storm of mingled blandishment and abuse.

On June 3, a pastoral letter read from all the pulpits of Germany, to packed churches, announced: "The men at the head of the new government have, to our great joy, given their formal assurance that they base both themselves and their work upon the Christian principles. This solemn declaration deserves the sincere recognition of all Catholics."

It went on, however, to criticize the mistakes that the regime had made already, and to deplore its attacks upon Catholicism. "We must never for-

get," it said, "that we are members of the universal Church, of that great Church, one, holy, catholic and apostolic, of which the head is the Holy Father in Rome, Christ's representative on earth."

This Pastoral Letter was read on June 3. Three days later, Fr. Blemert, of the village of Bertlich in Westphalia, was flung into prison for speaking disrespectfully of the new regime. On June 11, one of the two great Catholic Workers Unions, the Catholic Journeymen's Association, were addressed in Munich by von Papen. The Vice-Chancellor appealed to them to co-operate in building up the new order. But they received little immediate encouragement, for they were set upon the moment they left the Hall and their shirts torn off their backs by uniformed members of the Party. Priests accompanying them were beaten with steel and rubber truncheons.

On June 17, Baldur von Schirach was appointed head of the Party Youth Movement, implying supreme control of German Youth. He stated later that he was going to tolerate "no opposition from the Confessions."

Following statements by Goebbels in the press, Dr. Ley announced on June 21 that the new government would fight "with a brutality that knows no mercy" all enemies of the State, particularly the "red and the black." Jews, Communists and the Centre Party, he said, were the common foes of

Germany. They must "all be thrown into the same bag."

By the end of June, more priests were being arrested. There was mob violence in Munich. Stahlhelm units were being forcibly dissolved. On the 27th, Goering had appealed to Germans to report to him all persons engaged in anti-German activities. On July 1st, an official communique from the Secret Police announced the suppression of famous Catholic Youth organizations such as the *Jugendbund Deutscher Katholiken*, the *Windhorstbund*, the *Volksverein für das Katholische Deutschland*, the *Katholischer Jungmännerbund* and many others. The reason given by the Gestapo was "the campaign of hatred and systematic menacing of the State" conducted and carried on by these bodies.

On July 5, Brüning put through a call to Hindenburg. When he got through to the old soldier he announced the dissolution, once and for all, of the Centre Party.

Fifteen days later, in Rome, von Papen and the present Pope signed the Concordat between Church and State.

. . . . .

If there are tears to be shed, they need not be wasted on the Centre Party. In the difficult post-war years it had certainly done what it could. Animated by Christian ideals it had honestly tried

to fulfil, or insist on the fulfilment of, the terms dictated at Versailles. It had had a solid decency during that time which had earned it international respect. But in its gradual decay and death there was a flabby degeneration that cannot entirely be put down to the strength of the Party to which it found itself opposed.

Set against its *demise*, and all the more brilliant by contrast, came Hitler's triumph in the Concordat. All during that burning summer, violence against Catholics had increased. In the middle of it the news was flashed from Rome that von Papen had got the signature he required. Germany had made peace with the Vatican. Having achieved power by violence, having consolidated it by a criminal conflagration, having celebrated it by an attack upon the priesthood, Hitler crowned it with his first diplomatic treaty—an agreement with the world's greatest spiritual power.

Already it sounds impossible. But it happened. The Catholic Church, which for years had been attacked and abused, was the first power to honour his signature as head of the State. Few of his triumphs since can rival the audacity of that Concordat.

At once, in his best manner, he announced: "The contract just signed between the State and the Catholic Church will re-establish in the religious sphere that peace of which we all have need."

And the Sterilization Law was immediately promulgated.

. . . . .

For the hundredth time the Catholic layman must have scratched his poor bewildered head. Where did he stand? Hardly a single paper—and there were still Catholic papers in those days—had raised a word of protest against the Sterilization Law. The Bishops, meeting annually at Fulda, made their protest: but it was a protest without practical effect. Press attacks continued without ceasing. Goering, at the Sports Palace in Berlin, referred to Catholics contemptuously as “black moles,” against which he warned all true Germans. A public appeal to the Hitler-Jugend, the Youth Movement of the Party, put these boys on their guard against the “disguised Marxists, the Jesuits, the black men, the men of Rome, who sabotage the progress of the nation.” The voices of Party leaders sank to tawdry depths of invective unusual even in the Reich.

The Church seldom acts quickly. Only now, at the end of that dizzy, bewildering year, did it at long last begin to answer back. The Faith, which in the eyes of many had started timidly, proceeded stupidly, acted negligently, began at the year's close to rally its abiding force. Perhaps it is true that she had been weak, when she might have been strong, hesitant when she might have been decisive, acquiescent when she should have been indignant. Perhaps

she had trusted too long in promises which had been so quickly repudiated. In her desire for peace it is possible that she had made concessions which no peace warranted, had swallowed insults that no Church with her prestige should have accepted.

Be that as it may it was not until Advent that the first of her voices was raised, speaking clearly, proudly, without equivocation, without fear. In Munich, Cardinal Faulhaber gave a series of sermons. The Cathedral was so packed that the sermons had to be relayed to neighbouring churches. In their thousands the laity came thronging to hear the voice of authority: the thousands of ordinary, decent Catholics who throughout 1933 had been plunged into a confusion of conscience that had already brought with it disappointment and dismay. The content of these sermons, despite the censorship, spread throughout Catholic Germany. They became the first rallying point for the members of the Church. The meek silence which the Church had kept since the overwhelming victory of the new regime was broken at last. The terms of the Concordat had already been ignored. Promises and assurances lay side by side, broken, forgotten, trampled under foot. The Church had been insulted from January to December.

On New Year's Eve the Cathedral in Munich was packed again. Cardinal Faulhaber preached the last sermon of the series—on the false choice that

National-Socialism had tried to place before Catholicism: the choice between "Germanism" and disloyalty.

"In thinking about the ancient Germans we want facts, not fairy tales," he said. It was through Christianity that the Germans had become a civilized nation. He refuted the Nordic nonsense of Rosenberg's *Mythus*. Catholic and Protestant, he said, must fight together for their faith in the true Christ, the Christ of the Gospels, who was a Man, and Who had suffered.

"There is no need," he said, "to reject Christianity and to set up a Nordic or Germanic religion in order to profess our nationality. One thing we must never forget: we are redeemed by the Precious Blood of our crucified Lord."

Thus, in the last hours of the dying year, the Church raised its voice at last, and proclaimed again the eternal glory of the Crucifix: the honour of that Cross now threatened by the Swastika.

. . . . .

.

## V

### THE STRUGGLE FOR YOUTH

NATIONAL-SOCIALISM and Roman Catholicism have one point in common: the importance they attach to youth. The only difference is that whereas National Socialism starts on the child when it is three Catholicism usually waits until the age of reason. Nor does Catholicism, with all its dogma, demand the blind servility expected of the National-Socialist.

In the words of Dr. Ley, Minister of Labour, and head of the *Arbeitsfront*: "We begin with the child when he is three years old. As soon as he begins to think he gets a little flag put into his hand. Then follows the school, the Hitler Youth, the S.A. and military training. We don't let him go. And when adolescence is past, then comes the *Arbeitsfront* which takes him again and does not let him go till he dies, whether he likes it or not."<sup>1</sup>

Only in modern Germany could you get such a book of nursery rhymes as the famous *Military Mother Goose*, published in 1935. Here is one of the verses suitable for toddlers:

"What puffs and patters,  
What clicks and clatters?"

<sup>1</sup> See also the *Angriff*, February 14, 1937, in which Dr. Ley makes an almost identical declaration.



I know what, oh what fun.

It's a lovely Gatling gun!"

A system of education so organized as to soak the child in military consciousness, and in which "knowledge is only a secondary matter" (*Mein Kampf*, p. 542) would not have been logical if it had not attempted to oust religious teaching as far as possible, and in particular the teaching of the Catholic Church.

To make sure that the new teaching was on strictly revised lines, Minister Rust's department examined over 160,000 teachers as to their "reliability" on National-Socialist doctrine during 1933. By the beginning of 1934 he was ready to start his drive.

In February 1934, Hitler appointed Rosenberg supreme head of all "cultural" matters in the Reich. The Catholic Bishops realized that the real struggle for youth was about to begin. Already a large number of associations and Church youth organizations had been disbanded and dissolved: but so far there had not been a strong direct attack upon the schools themselves.<sup>1</sup>

Once again Hitler adopted those tactics which run through the whole story of National-Socialism, both internally and in foreign affairs. When he

<sup>1</sup> A documented account of Germany's plans for youth is given in *Education in Nazi Germany*, by "Two English Investigators," published by the Kulturkampf Association, Southampton Buildings, W.C.2.

made Rosenberg supreme chief in the cultural field, when everything was prepared for the launching of the attack on the schools, he received Cardinal Schulte and gave him verbally his promise that the rights of Catholics would be protected and no article of the Concordat infringed.

But through that spring and summer the German press began their attacks in earnest: not only upon Catholic education, but upon the Catholic idea. The Catholic bishops who meet every year at Fulda—birthplace of their patron saint, the Englishman, St. Boniface—were forced this year to issue a pastoral letter to the faithful expressing their grave doubts as to the turn that things were taking, particularly in reference to the promises made in the Concordat. This pastoral letter the faithful never saw—it was intercepted by the Gestapo, and confiscated. Yet again, Hitler adopted the same methods. In response to their request, he received the Bishops himself on the 26th of June and gave them a solemn assurance that he for his part would put an end to the neo-paganism of the controlled press, and that he personally was not going to stand in the way of the good work being done by Catholic Action. On June 30, four days later, in the blood-bath that shocked the whole world, a Dr. Klausener was among those assassinated by Hitler's orders. Dr. Klausener was the head of Catholic Action in Berlin.

The autumn of 1934, in view of the coming plebiscite in the Saar, was quiet. Not until early in 1935 was the fight for youth renewed.

Fifteen days after the conclusion of the plebiscite in the Catholic Saar, the official Bavarian press opened fire on the Confessional schools.

Bavaria was the most Catholic part of the Alt Reich. Over 80 per cent. of the children went to Catholic schools. Religious instruction was given by priests, and Catholic teaching was formally protected both by the Bavarian Concordat and by the general Concordat of 1933. There were at that time 5,233 Catholic elementary schools in Bavaria, attended by 780,000 children and employing 15,000 teachers. There were roughly 2,000 Protestant schools, and 216 non-denominational.

Now, as is well-known, Catholic teaching in Bavaria, for all practical purposes, no longer exists. It has been wiped out. Yet Berlin claims that the terms of the Concordat have not been broken. How was it done?

I was there during this period, and it was instructive to watch the methods of the press once its guns were fully trained on the objective. I took a morbid professional interest in what was going on: but even years of journalism in England had not prepared me for the ferocious efficiency of the orchestra. Goebbels was able to conduct in Bavaria. For it was more by press intimidation than by any other

means that the whole structure of Catholic teaching in a great Catholic state was swept out of existence.

The press began on a fairly high note. It revived the old cry of "treachery" levelled at Catholicism, and underlined its enfeebling influence on German youth. The papers said you could not be a good Catholic and a good German. Little Catholic boys should not squabble with little Protestant boys—they should both grow up good, strong German boys. From this argument it was easy to introduce an even sterner note—that the parent who sent his child to a Confessional school was hindering the resurrection of Germany and causing sorrow to the Führer. For the benefit of those who might not read the papers, large placards appeared in the Bavarian villages. These placards, on walls, houses and telegraph poles, proclaimed:

*"One People, One Reich, One Führer—One Community School."*

*"He who sends his child to the denominational school, wrongs his child—and interferes with the unity of our People."*

*"We do not want Catholic or Evangelical schools, we want the school of Adolf Hitler."*

Herr Bauer, Head Education Officer for Munich, issued the following statement:

"Formerly teachers had to refrain from influencing parents. Now things have changed. They must advise that the Community school is the school

of the Third Reich. For this school they must work actively . . . If they fail they must take the consequences.

“ Teachers having taken the oath of allegiance are pledged to obey the will of the Führer, and to take an active part in the struggle for the schools.”

All teaching by nuns and priests was openly and energetically abused—but again mainly on the ground that such teaching was un-German.

It was made clear, over and over again, that to vote for the Confessional school was to vote treacherously against the new Germany, and against the express wish of the Führer himself. More important still to parents of large and often poor families, it was made increasingly plain that only children at a community school enjoyed the best chances of work when their education was complete.

After a year of this intensive propaganda, upon a people to whom work was of paramount importance, the first vote was taken.

The Community school obtained a vote of 65 per cent.

But that was only the beginning. The attack was immediately renewed. Twelve out of the sixteen Catholic Colleges for Teachers were suppressed. In October 1936, Dr. Böpple, Bavarian Minister of State for Education and Culture, announced officially:

“ All teaching Sisters will be deprived of their

right to teach in State schools as from January 1, 1937. . . . The National-Socialist State can no longer permit ecclesiastical teachers to take care of the children. They can no longer do justice to the new state principles and educational aims: they are prevented from giving the attention necessary to-day to physical training, German history, racial science and biology. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Very soon schools were being closed down at the "request of the parents." It became increasingly obvious that no boy could hope for advancement who did not attend a Community school. By 1938, in addition to the ravages in the elementary schools, twenty-two Bavarian high schools had followed state instructions. The withdrawal of the priests and nuns was of course followed by the introduction of National-Socialist teachers trained in the new ideology. These teachers take the following oath:

"Adolf Hitler, we swear that we will train the youth of Germany that they will grow up in your ideology, for your aims and purposes, in the direction set by your will. This is pledged to you by the whole German system of education from the primary school through to the University."

On November 19, 1938, the Minister of the Interior and for Cultural Affairs considered that the time was ripe to deliver the *coup de grâce*. By his decree Z.IV.22.43.126a. it was ordained:

<sup>1</sup> *Education in Nazi Germany*, p. 67.

1. Any lay teacher can now do the work previously done only by priests. He no longer requires the "*missio canonis*."

2. Only those priests can still teach who give a guarantee that nothing in their religious classes will contradict the world-view of National-Socialism.

3. Teaching must follow the lines laid down by the Ministry.

4. If in any school teachers prepared to follow these conditions are not to be found, then in that school there must be no religious instruction.

5. In high schools religious instruction can only be given when at least twenty pupils demand it in writing.

6. Every religious teacher who teaches nothing but religion will cease to be paid as from January 1, 1939.

Although this particular decree was issued for the special benefit of Austria, it was of course applicable to the Reich as a whole, and dealt a final blow at the Bavarian schools.

Each year, after twelve months of increasing threats, after open proof of the disadvantages and terrorism exercised against followers of the Confessional schools, the Party had held a plebiscite. The whole melancholy story can be told in the few simple figures of these forced votes.<sup>1</sup>

In 1933, 89 per cent. voted for the Confessional school.

<sup>1</sup> *Catholiques d'Allemagne*, p. 316.

In 1935, 65 per cent.

In 1936, 35 per cent.

In 1937, 4 per cent.

From 1934 to 1939 this process of throttling Catholic education had continued throughout the Alt Reich. The Party of course claims that the terms of the Concordat have not been broken on the ground that the parents themselves have voted for the Community school. Whatever history may say about the rights and wrongs of the case, there can be no doubt of National-Socialism's success in this field: they have indeed strangled the religious teaching of youth.

Rosenberg's famous statement of March 7, 1937: "A State which does not want to imperil its soul cannot suffer different kinds of educational systems, let alone promote them"—has been abundantly fulfilled. Already on October 27, 1938, the Bavarian Minister Wagner could say with truth: "Throughout the Bavarian territory, the transformation of confessional schools into community schools has just been completed. At this turning point in the history of our public teaching, I want to thank all those who have collaborated in the accomplishment of the task which was put before me."

The last few words of that statement illustrate more clearly than the hypocrisy of Berlin the Party's real attitude towards the terms of the Concordat.



Wagner had successfully completed "the task which was put before him."

If the struggle was longest and bitterest in Bavaria, that was merely because Bavaria was the most Catholic state of Germany. But the same story had been unfolded elsewhere. All over the Reich, Goebbels' orchestra had played its thunderous tune: and the teaching of children had been taken over. In many parts—indeed in most parts—the children still receive two hours a week, provided enough pupils demand it. But the whole atmosphere of the schools has been reversed, and a new sense of values is drummed into receptive ears. The glory of war, the honour of battle, the thrill of victory has replaced the "dull" Christian doctrines. The study of tactics is made more exciting than the Catechism: and a new Germany is growing up that has never had the chance to learn, when it was young, that you could be a Christian and still be brave. It is taught only that religion is something for weaklings, for boys who are afraid to suffer for Germany. On this devastating lie, the youth of the country is being sedulously led away from all religious understanding.

. . . . .

Claiming as it does the totality of the soul of the German people, National-Socialism quite logically fought for the control of youth outside school hours as well as during them. No English book on

Germany has done justice to the effect upon youth of the various compulsory Labour Camps. During the months that are spent by the German boy in one of these camps, an atmosphere is created calculated to kill any religious development that he may have shown during his time at school. No priest or parson is allowed inside a Labour Camp. Here the boy learns the glory of war, and the effeminacy of religion. At a time when he is most susceptible to such doctrines, the State drums into him the Nordic theory—of which one of the tenets is a contempt for the Crucifix. Just as the young man in the Labour Camp sends his own clothes home on the day of his arrival there, and is put into a uniform which he cannot discard, so he is expected to leave behind him once and for all the “weak, un-German Christianity” of the Catholic Church.

*Reichsbischof* Müller had formally incorporated the Evangelical Youth Association into the *Hitler-Jugend* (the official Party Youth Movement) as far back as 1934. But though Protestantism had surrendered, the Catholic leaders, thanks largely to the extent of their earlier organization, were able to hold out much longer. While the Bishops made their protests on the grounds of the Concordat, Catholic Youth itself set a magnificent example. It stuck to its faith through years of hardship, contumely and trial. One by one its associations were disbanded—many had been disbanded at the

start, as mentioned earlier—but those that remained refused to be shaken by the attacks made upon them.

National-Socialism nevertheless had made up its mind; and against the machinery of the State, Catholic Youth was eventually helpless. Baldur von Schirach, supreme German Youth Leader, publicly declared: "Confessional groups possess no privileges, and we shall not call a halt in front of the Catholic Associations."

The length to which the State was prepared to go is best shown by the case of the two thousand Catholic boys who paid a visit to the Holy Father in Rome at Easter, 1935. On their return from the audience which they were granted they were set upon at the frontier, at Constance, by the secret police. Their cameras, rucksacks, rosaries, musical instruments, souvenirs of Rome—everything they had with them was confiscated. Their shirts were torn off their backs. They did not see their belongings again.

Throughout 1936 more organizations and associations were disbanded. A typical example was that of the Catholic Young Men's Association of Munster, which in 1937 was dissolved (and all its funds, of course, confiscated) for indulging in illegal activities. It was stated officially: "The various organizations affiliated to the Catholic Young Men's Associations have until quite recently, with the permission of

their ecclesiastical and secular leaders, organized excursions and rambles—at some of which identical clothing was worn—have indulged in sport and games of various kinds, and have organized and carried on social evenings and similar gatherings in a predominantly secular manner.” The law under which they were thus liable to suspension was the Reichspresident’s decree of February 1933, “for the protection of People and State.”

During the following year, 1938, most of the remaining Catholic Youth organizations were declared illegal on similar grounds. In many, but not all, of the cases, their funds were also confiscated.

Meanwhile the Hitler-Jugend had been extended to embrace the whole of German Youth as far back as December 1936. But tribute must be paid during those years to thousands and thousands of young Catholic boys and girls who went through unhappiness, and insults, and contempt—at an age when these things hurt the most—for the sake of their faith. Long after their parents in Bavaria had begun to vote for the Community School, these boys and girls were suffering for their religion and fighting for its survival when resistance might mean disgrace and material failure. These boys and girls set an example, if it is not impertinent to say so, to their elders.

Now the young German must go through his Hitler-Jugend training as a part of his education.

The "H-J," from the physical point of view, is a magnificent organization. It is doing wonders in bringing up a fit and healthy nation. It helps to oust the evils of class consciousness. It gives every young German a genuine pride in his country, and makes him feel glad to serve his nation's ends. A similar youth movement in this country could change the face of Britain. But it would need to be different in one respect from the H-J. The Hitler-Jugend are pumped full of a moral and mental philosophy unworthy of the country they are taught to serve.

One of their great branches—at Halle—hung up over the University clinic there an inscription noted by the Dean of Chichester in his book.<sup>1</sup> This inscription describes as well as any official definition the spirit in which they live and the attitude they are expected to adopt towards followers of the Christian teaching. It runs as follows:

"The Faith fanatics, who still to-day slide down on their knees with faces uplifted to heaven, waste their time in churchgoing and prayers, and have not yet understood that they are living on the earth and that therefore their task is of a thoroughly earthly kind. All we Hitler people can only look with the greatest contempt on those young people who still run to their silly Evangelical or Catholic Churches in order to give vent to their quite super-

<sup>1</sup> *The Struggle for Religious Freedom in Germany*, p. 173.

fluous religious feelings. Who understands Christianity best? Those who are always praying for the salvation of their more or less dirty souls, or we who have set about our task in a hard fashion? ”

As with the Labour Camps, there are no chaplains in the Hitler-Jugend. Both are now a part of the German boy's life. Between them they set the seal on the Party victory in the long struggle for Germany's Catholic youth. There can be no question that National-Socialism has wrenched the control of the young away from the Churches: and that it is now moulding it along the lines laid down and proclaimed in the National-Socialist ideology.

. . . . .

## VI

### 1935-1936: "SMUGGLERS AND PERVERTS"

DURING 1935 and 1936, while the press campaign against the Confessional school was at its height, the State also made two mass attacks upon the integrity of the Church itself: through the smuggling trials of 1935 and the "morality" trials of 1936.

Catholic newspapers in England have shrunk from ever telling this sordid story in any detail, but it forms a part, and an important part, of the struggle. It shows the methods to which the Party was prepared to resort, and no honest account of those years can ignore it. Over both attacks the State went to immense trouble. Each attack, while it ran, was continuous "front page news" for months throughout the Reich. It is time that the truth were told.

Many Catholics like to believe that the currency-smuggling arrests of 1935 were made on trumped-up charges. This is entirely untrue.

The position was this: Germany had been protecting her currency for some time. In his first year of office Hitler had passed a law prohibiting the export of German cash. This put all German institutions which owed money abroad in an awkward position—and among those institutions were Catholic Orders and monasteries. Dr. Schacht had

allowed certain business organizations to make their repayments, or had devised means whereby these repayments could be legally carried through. But in the case of the Catholic institutions no such dispensation had been considered.

They were thus left in a ludicrous position. They owed money abroad which they felt in conscience bound to repay: but the State had made it illegal for them to fulfil a moral obligation. They were faced with the choice of obeying the moral law, or of making it subsidiary to a civil law they neither understood nor believed in. There were further those cases where monasteries received, or sent, travelling or other expenses to monasteries of the same Order, say, in Rome. In a number of cases it was inevitable that the heads of Orders decided that the moral law had greater weight than the civil. Money which for years had passed between Catholic institutions in Italy, Hungary, Holland and Germany continued to pass as before. There was no question of attempting to make a profit on the exchange: it was a normal flow of currency which had been going on for generations before the Hitler regime, ruled by the constitutions of the Orders themselves.

In Switzerland and Holland there was a further complication faced by those monks and nuns who lived near the frontier. I have spoken with several who are to this day not in the least ashamed of



having smuggled Marks out of the Reich, or received them from over the German border.

"Apart from the question of repayment of debts," one priest now living in Switzerland explained to me, "refugees used to come to our lay brothers and ask for their assistance. We were living ten miles inside the German frontier. These refugees, who had lost their all, who were allowed to take out with them only ten Marks, used to come and beg for assistance in getting out of the country more than the amount legally allowed. The lay brothers, rather than refuse their assistance, often took the risk, knowing quite well that they invited arrest.

"In the case of the majority of nuns, however, it was sheer ignorance. The various currency laws at that time were so complicated that the Customs people themselves were at a loss to understand them. To these poor Sisters, who had long ago shut themselves off from the world, they were a rigmarole of incomprehensible nonsense. All they knew was that they wanted to help the poor, or to repay a debt to a Dutch or Swiss sister institution. They could not believe they were doing anything wrong in performing a simple duty that seemed to them obviously right. They were astounded when they found themselves being labelled as criminals working for the downfall of the Reich. They had no idea what it was all about.

"But there has never been the slightest question of

doubt that German currency was being sent over the frontier as usual by various religious during 1935."

Indeed no Catholic in Germany denies for a moment that this smuggling of currency—even though the smugglers did not even sometimes realize that they were smuggling—did take place. The injustice lay in the manner in which it was seized upon and used by the State. The newspapers were given instructions to open their columns wide to all accounts of the cases, and the "criminals" were treated with a brutality that bore no relation to their "crime." Once again the main argument of the press was that these "black swindlers" were working against Germany: that they were unpatriotic, alien creatures intent only on the downfall of the Third Reich.

The first case came up before the Moabite Court in Berlin on May 15, 1935, against a nun, Catherine Wiedendorfer, secretary of the Order of St. Vincent de Paul, accused of having for two years sent sums of money totalling RM.250,000 into Belgium. During the trial itself she was made to wear ordinary clothes: then, for greater dramatic effect, she was ordered to wear her habit again to hear sentence pronounced—five years hard labour, five years loss of civil rights, fines totalling RM.350,000, and in the case of insolvency a further 14 months hard labour.

Five days later, before the same court, appeared the Mother Superior of an Augustinian Order in

Cologne. She was given five years hard labour, and a slightly lower fine.

On May 29, a Franciscan priest, Fr. Goertler, for "repeated breaking of the currency laws," was sentenced to ten years hard labour, five years loss of civil rights, a fine of RM.350,000, 27 extra months of hard labour if unable to pay, and a general fine of RM.500,000 imposed upon the Franciscan Order.

About sixty religious altogether were arrested on these charges, and with some cleverness only one case a week, on the average, came before a court. They were thus dragged over an entire year, by which time diligent readers of the official press might well get the impression that the Catholic Orders had no other occupation than the smuggling of German currency into neutral countries for their own advancement and Germany's downfall. Nearly all the adjectives in the armoury of the Propaganda Ministry came into play for this campaign against the "black rats" who were treacherously betraying their heritage.

Yet the campaign was a failure.

In the first place the vindictiveness of the sentences imposed upon often ignorant Sisters for small sums defeated their own end. It laid bare the origin of the attack. Secondly, the nature of the attacks upon religious Orders which had been known for centuries to devote themselves to charity produced only an increased sympathy for the work they were

doing. Thirdly, it soon became plain that in the majority of the cases the Orders were genuinely only trying to pay their debts abroad: and fourthly, the press foolishly attempted to attack certain Catholic charities whose activities were so well-known, and so appreciated by the poor, that the ranting of the *Beobachter* trying to prove that they worked only to line their own pockets had the opposite effect to that intended.

For example, one particularly sensational trial of a nun was published on the eve of the annual collection made by "Caritas." "Caritas" was a very large Catholic organization that used to work for the poor all over Germany. It was hoped that by publishing an account of the trial on the eve of the collection, the collection would be crippled. The public was warned against giving its money to "profiteers and traitors." But the result, of course, was one of the greatest collections Caritas had ever known. (A few months later Caritas was absorbed by the *Winter-Hilfe*, an official Party charity.)

Against this propaganda, the Catholic press was helpless. By the Amann decrees of April, it was gagged. Further it was forced to publish, without comment, speeches made by Goering, Goebbels and Rosenberg. Everything, therefore, that appeared in the Party press seemed to go unanswered in papers that still bore names known to the Catholics as part of the Catholic press.

But even this silence was so complete that it showed again the manner and the type of the campaign. By this time Catholics realized that there was no longer any freedom in press matters. When the Party pointed to the silence of Catholics as an admission of their guilt, no-one was deceived. This was indeed the one campaign which was badly handled by Goebbels from beginning to end. If he had employed more subtlety and less brutality, if the cases themselves had been dealt with a little less crudely, or had even evidenced a glimmering of mercy, the campaign might have achieved a proportion of its aims. As it was, the whole attack eventually fizzled out—the first and only utter failure of the Party in all the years of struggle.

. . . . .

The following year another form of attack was attempted—far more sordid, far more fantastic, and rather more successful.

On April 29, 1937, the *Völkischer Beobachter* carried a huge headline, underlined with the usual scarlet, on its front page:

CHURCHES AND MONASTERIES DEBASED  
TO HAUNTS OF DEPRAVITY

Beneath, the eager reader discovered that he was promised “one thousand cases of priests and nuns” who were to be tried for offences so appalling that

details could only be revealed in later numbers as the trials proceeded.

On May 26 the attack began with an offensive against the Franciscans. Two Franciscan brothers of Waldbreitbach (not priests, though the papers described them as such) were sentenced to eight years and four years hard labour for offences against mentally deficient children in their care. The evidence of the children was preferred to their own.

That was, however, a humble start. The German press then announced that no fewer than 267 Franciscans were to appear before the judges at Coblenz on similar charges of assaulting children. As it turned out, this number represented rather more than half the total number of Franciscan priests then living in the State.<sup>1</sup> One priest who expressed in the pulpit his doubt as to the credibility of the judges of Coblenz was at once given nine months hard labour. Even hardened anti-Catholics were surprised at this sudden discovery that more than half of an entire religious order was to be found sexually unbalanced and guilty of criminal tendencies.

The press campaign, however, roared its way through the summer months. The trials, in a press which Hitler had just previously claimed to have purged of pornography, were described in detail: not only the trials, but the accusations. I remember one particular case which began with columns of

<sup>1</sup> *Catholiques d'Allemagne*, p. 278.

descriptive work concerning midnight orgies said to have taken place in a monastery attached to a boys' school. Word pictures were even given of the monks gliding back, "silent and bare-foot," to their cells, there to await with pious demeanour the ringing of the Matins bell. The descriptions of the orgies themselves left no detail to the imagination. At the end of this particular trial, the monks concerned were actually acquitted, it having been impossible to discover a thread of evidence against them. But the propaganda had done its work, and by this time the press were denouncing some other monastery, with bigger and better orgies.

What are the real facts and figures of this, the most determined attack up to that time, made on the Catholic clergy?

In the first place, two-thirds of the accused were lay brothers, and not priests: a fact which in general the papers did not bother to point out.

In Germany at that time there were over 100,000 men and women who came under General Goering's category of "black moles"—i.e., members of the various religious orders, or secular clergy. Of these, some 25,000 were priests.

Of the 21,461 Catholic secular priests, forty-nine were eventually involved in proceedings and twenty-one were sentenced. Of 4,714 priests belonging to monastic orders, nine were brought to justice and one sentenced.

This makes fifty-eight priests altogether, out of 25,635: or rather less than one quarter of one per cent. Of these fifty-eight, we can assume that the majority were in fact guilty. Some of them, in fact, had already been found guilty by their own ecclesiastical courts and punished years before the Hitler regime. Their cases had simply been resurrected by the Gestapo, and put on again as one might revive a theatrical success.

In spite of lavish promises to bring hundreds of nuns to justice, and to lay bare the vile iniquities of convent life, the Party found itself unable after all to make a case. It contented itself throughout the summer with a stream of inspired insinuation.

The great promise of the campaign was therefore never fulfilled. The "thousand priests and nuns" referred to by the *Beobachter* in the spring had dwindled to fifty-eight priests and a large number of lay brothers by the autumn.

It would be easy to write that the morality trials, like the currency cases, were a failure: but in this instance it is probable that a small proportion of the mud stuck. No-one who has not seen the German propaganda machine at work when it is properly roused can have the faintest appreciation of its tremendous force. Accompanied as it is by a complementary campaign over the wireless, driving home its point day after day like some immense mechanical piston, the mind very easily begins to



accept, bit by bit, at least some part of the material hammered into it. No voice of criticism ever rises against the machine. No fact is ever questioned, no inaccuracy refuted. Surely, the mind says, there cannot be so much smoke without fire. Perhaps not all these tales are true—but at least a percentage of them must be authentic. Based on the correct assumption that the masses are not critical, the machine thunders on. For weeks people may disbelieve—but slowly, eventually, they give in. In *Mein Kampf* Hitler points out that a big enough lie, told often enough, will be accepted by the masses as truth—and he is perfectly right. Propaganda, which will be the Fourth Service of every nation in the next war, has been used brilliantly by the Reich to conquer its own enemies in time of peace.

This particular campaign, against the morals of the Catholic clergy, was not burdened by an overload of truth. But it had behind it the full force of a magnificently organized attack. As an attempt to prove that the clergy were immoral, it was as hopeless a failure as the currency trials had been before it; but looked on as an agent in strengthening the suspicions of the masses against the priesthood it is probable that it was partially successful. It played with some skill on mankind's undoubted interest in sheer smut.

Factually, as has been pointed out, it was a failure because it could not fulfil its promise. Even

the authorities were disappointed and said so. "With regard to the immorality trials," Rosenberg admitted, "I am of the opinion that these were not particularly effective in Germany proper, and that therefore we should be careful and not accept every accusation as actual fact. You know that the Jewish world press is very vigilant, and makes every use of unfounded accusations against the clergy as grounds for a savage campaign against National-Socialist Germany."

To the Catholics the campaign was of indirect value in revealing once and for all the possibilities of Dr. Goebbels' news-orchestra, and the kind of tune it was prepared to play. No Catholic who saw it will ever forget the caricature that appeared one day on the front page of the *Schwarze Korps* with the caption: "Suffer little children to come unto Me."

## VII

### VATICAN THUNDER

THE following year, 1937, was to produce one moment of tremendous drama, which may or may not turn out, even now, to be the turning point of the whole struggle. But first it is important to consider the general position that had then been reached.

In the battle for the youth of Germany, all was over bar the shouting of the press. The Church had lost the education of its children. The parents, intimidated and to a certain extent blackmailed, had themselves voted for the Community school which was quickly replacing the Confessional. They had indeed voted its death sentence, and the sentence was in process of being carried out with the minimum of delay.

Simultaneous attacks upon Catholic youth organizations outside the school had also been successful. On the ground that they conspired against the State, the majority had already been declared illegal, and dissolved. The *Hitler-Jugend* had been made a universal institution in December of the previous year, so that Catholic children now came under influences both in the school and outside it which openly derided Christian teaching.

Further, laws had come into force making all religious gatherings, other than those inside a church for some form of divine service, answerable to the Secret Police. It was impossible to hold a procession of the Blessed Sacrament without the permission of the Gestapo: and the Gestapo had long ago been relieved of any obligation towards the recognized laws of the land.

Attempts to discredit the Catholic clergy by bringing them to court on charges of currency smuggling and immorality had failed in themselves, but had succeeded in instilling into a proportion of the masses the fact that they were at liberty to insult the Church when and where they liked. It had been announced throughout Germany that neither priests nor nuns were to be trusted, morally, with the welfare of children.

The Catholic press—and indeed all freedom of expression—though as explicitly protected by the Concordat as Catholic education, had been suppressed. Germany, which had been a country rich in local papers, now spoke only with his master's voice. Since the Amann decrees of April 24, 1935—"measures taken for the safeguarding of the daily press"—one thousand newspapers had been put down, and hundreds of others had been forced to cease publication through the dismissal of their staffs. Those papers that remained, whether with a Catholic tradition or without it, were bound by law

to carry all Party speeches and forbidden any form of criticism.

In the same way the annual discourse of the Bishops' meeting each summer at Fulda, protesting honestly and with courage against those aspects of the regime that affected the Faith, had been confiscated by Secret Police. Pastoral letters failed to reach the congregations for which they were intended. Even the notices on the Church doors came under the censorship regulations.

The cry of "political Catholicism" had been raised again, and priests who criticized the cultural aspects of the regime from their pulpit had been arrested and imprisoned.

Goering, Frick, Rosenberg—and Hitler himself—had made plain their attitude towards any Catholicism that was not strictly German Catholicism. The "positive Christianity" desired by Rosenberg had been made the criterion of any German's rights to full citizenship. The Secret Police had been zealous and efficient in helping to bring about the cultural change desired by the Party leaders.

Christmas 1936 had for the first time been celebrated with pagan rites by members of the Party, with the approval of a section of the press.

The New Year—1937—had opened with a further attack upon the morals of the priesthood, led by the *Schwarze Korps* who under the heading "INCEST AT THE ALTAR" had given a blaze of publicity to the

arrest and trial of a religious student of nineteen. "Why worry about this?" asked the *Schwarze Korps* in a memorable article. "After all, when has a thing like incest been a hindrance to a religious career? What about Alexander VI and the great Popes of history?"

In most parts of Germany, the crucifix had, by order, given way to portraits of the Führer, except in churches themselves.

During the spring of 1937 the Bishops had made one last attempt to come to an understanding with the Führer. When this failed, men like Cardinal Faulhaber in Munich, Count von Preysing in Berlin, Cardinal Bertram and Cardinal Schulte were forced to tell the faithful that negotiation seemed no longer possible. They appealed direct for guidance to His Holiness in Rome.

And so to the nights of March 17, 18 and 19, 1937.

. . . . .

Even now, it is impossible to piece together the details of those amazing nights. No names can be mentioned. Only a few men in Europe know exactly how, and by whom, it was organized. No newspaper in the world has been able to print the full story. Perhaps it never will be printed.

All that is known is that a priest travelled north from Rome, across the Italian and Austrian borders, carrying with him a document which if it had been

found would have meant for him, in all probability, a slow death in some prison camp.

Inside the German frontier the priest was met, and the document duplicated by night. Thousands of copies were made.

Once duplicated it was distributed to the hundreds of young men who were waiting for it. They included priests and laity. Through the night of the 19th and Palm Sunday Eve these men, on motor cycles, each one of them risking certain imprisonment, did their work across the whole of Germany. From the great towns, they spread out to the outlying parishes. Not a word, not an inkling of what was happening came to the ears of the Secret Police. One betrayal, and the cause was lost; but there was no betrayal.

Palm Sunday morning, and the thoughts of the Catholic world turned to the Passion of Christ, and the sufferings of the Man who had died for man, upon the Cross. Throughout Germany the churches were packed.

And simultaneously, that Palm Sunday morning, in every church in Germany—in the Cathedrals and the city churches and the village chapels, from the southern parts of Bavaria to the north of Prussia—the priest at Mass entered the pulpit with some sheets of hastily duplicated copy in his hand. The original, brought over the border, was dated "The Sunday of Passion, March 14, 1937" and signed by His

Holiness, Pius XI. On Palm Sunday, March 21, the Pope's Encyclical, *Mit brennender Sorge*, was read to the faithful throughout the whole of Germany.

. . . . .

*Mit brennender Sorge*—"with burning anxiety"—the Holy Father replied both to the prayers of his people and the claims of the state in which they lived.

"Secret and open measures of intimidation," says the Encyclical, "the threat of civic and economic disabilities, bear on the loyalty of certain classes of Catholic functionaries a pressure which violates every human right and dignity. Our whole-hearted paternal sympathy goes out to those who must pay so dearly for their loyalty to Christ and the Church; but directly the highest interests are at stake, with the alternative of spiritual loss, there is but one alternative left, that of heroism. . . .

" 'Revelation,' in its Christian sense, means the word of God addressed to man. The use of this word for the 'suggestions' of race and blood, for the irradiations of a people's history, is mere equivocation. False coins of this sort do not deserve Christian currency. 'Faith' consists in holding as true what God has revealed and proposes through His Church to man's acceptance. . . . The joyful and proud confidence in the future of one's people, instinct in every heart, is quite a different



thing from faith in the religious sense. To substitute the one for the other, and demand on the strength of this, to be numbered among the faithful followers of Christ, is a senseless play on words, if it does not conceal a confusion of concepts, or worse."

After dealing with immortality and original sin, as accepted by Christian belief, the Holy Father speaks of the moral order: "It is on faith in God, preserved pure and stainless, that man's morality is based. All efforts to remove from under morality and the moral order the granite foundation of faith, and to substitute for it the shifting sands of human regulations, sooner or later lead these individuals or societies to moral degradation. . . . No coercive power of the State, no purely human ideal, however noble and lofty it be, will ever be able to make shift for the supreme and decisive impulses generated by faith in God and in Christ. . . . To hand over the moral law to man's subjective opinion, which changes with the times, instead of anchoring it in the holy will of the eternal God and His commandments, is to open wide every door to the forces of destruction. The resulting dereliction of the eternal principles of an objective morality, which educates conscience and ennobles every department and organization of life, is a sin against the destiny of a nation, a sin whose bitter fruit will poison future generations. . . ."

On the natural law: "Parents who are earnest

and conscious of their educative duties, have a primary right to the education of the children God has given them in the spirit of their faith, and according to its prescriptions. Laws and measures which in school questions fail to respect this freedom of the parents go against natural law; and are immoral. The Church . . . cannot but declare that the recent enrolment into schools, organized without a semblance of freedom, is the result of unjust pressure, and is a violation of every common right."

To Youth: "Thousands of voices ring in your ears a Gospel which has not been revealed by the Father in Heaven. Thousands of pens are wielded in the service of a Christianity, which is not of Christ. . . . We are well aware that there is many a humble soldier of Christ in your ranks, who with torn feelings but a determined heart, accepts his fate, finding his one consolation in the thought of suffering insults for the name of Jesus. To-day we see you threatened with new dangers and new molestations, We say to you: If anyone should preach to you a Gospel other than the one you received on the knees of a pious mother, from the lips of a believing father, or through teaching faithful to God and His Church, 'let him be anathema' . . . Sing your hymns to freedom, but do not forget the freedom of the children of God. . . . He who sings hymns of loyalty to his terrestrial country should not, for that reason,

become unfaithful to God and His Church, or a deserter and traitor to his heavenly country. . . .”

Impossible, in a few words, to do justice to that Encyclical. It dealt, fully and openly, with the Concordat, with the National-Socialist *Weltanschauung*, with the racial doctrine, with the practical methods employed by the Third Reich, with the Christian conception of Christ the Man, with attacks on the Old Testament, with Revelation, with the folly of building a “German National Church,” with the invitations to apostasy, with Germany’s “sufferings and persecution,” and finally, as already quoted, with the immediate threats to parents and children in the Reich. In one tremendous flash of light, it illuminated, as no other account will ever be able to do, the whole nature and extent of the attack upon the Church, the width and depth of the gulf that separates National-Socialism from the Christianity of Christ.

That unknown priest who risked his life to carry a document across the border brought to Germany from Rome a torch of the eternal light.

. . . . .

The State replied immediately.

There were trials for treason. There were further morality trials. The Secret Police became more stringent in their measures even than before. Financial pressure began to be brought to bear upon the Church. The “voluntary grants,” given in

lieu of property previously confiscated, were abolished. In Bavaria the State grant dropped from 3.64 Marks per head to 2.8. The rules governing the education of children, and the tests for National-Socialist teachers, became more strict. There was a further "round-up" of people accused of attempting to disseminate Catholic news.

But in a short time this further burst of persecution died away. The churches remained full. The main body of Catholicism, rallied by the Encyclical, stood firm. Many who had drifted from the Church risked their livelihood to return to it.

. . . . .

What is the position, now, in 1939?

I have found the churches more packed than they have ever been. The spirit of men like Cardinal Faulhaber and the Protestant Pastor Niemoller has had a deeper and more lasting effect than years of propaganda. The "mood" of the Church is stronger than it was before Hitler came to power. You can be sure that no-one goes to church in modern Germany as a social formality: and yet, as I say, they are fuller than ever. At midnight Mass in Munich last year the throngs were the greatest ever known. Catholic literature, when it can be bought, sells twice as much as it did before National-Socialism tried to suppress it. Men are still joining the priesthood, girls are still becoming nuns.

It is in the schools alone that the State has con-

quered: but even there, nowadays, there is no bullying of Catholics. It is still possible, if the trouble is taken, to get religious education somehow fitted in. Boys are told that they are forfeiting their chances of employment if they stick stubbornly to an openly declared adherence to Catholicism, and many thousands lose their Faith. But the girls' schools have been less molested, and there may still be a generation of Catholic mothers who will carry on the Catholic tradition.

In a typical Bavarian town of over 20,000 inhabitants the priest told me: "It is true that our youth organizations have been disbanded, and that we can arrange nothing without permission; but there is now nothing that we can point to and call persecution. At the Girls' High School here they are receiving as much and as good Catholic teaching as before.

"One of the saddest things about Bavaria is that the Church of God was attacked in the name of God. One of the most joyous is that by God's grace that attack was a failure."

Since 1933, some 7,000 priests and pastors have been arrested. Of these 1,300 have been Protestant, the remainder Catholic. Few have gone to Concentration Camps.

The campaign seems over. The papers no longer scream their abuse. For months (at the time of writing) there has not been a single case against the

clergy reported in the press. It seems as if in the Alt Reich a form of peace has been achieved.

In Prussia, and particularly in Berlin, I met priests who assured me that Hitler has saved the Church. The Gestapo had taken no recent action. The spirit of the faithful was strong: stronger than it had been before the persecution began. There was a movement towards religion rather than against it.

Only one fear was expressed: that the Party may decide upon some form of financial action in a last attempt to break the power of the Church. The Church in Germany is still rich, and it is conceivable that Hitler may risk discontent for the sake of the Church's money. At present, in addition to the taxes it receives from the faithful, the State pays out a certain sum—said to be R.M.63,000,000 a year—on the Church.

If this were to happen, the move might be welcomed by Catholics—provided that they were left with genuine chances to support the Church themselves. Austria has not provided a happy omen. The future is as uncertain as it ever was.

During this, the first period of calm since National-Socialism seized the reins of Government, it is possible to sum up the gains and losses of the State and Catholic Church in the Alt Reich.

1. Hitler genuinely wanted unity inside the Reich. To achieve this on a National-Socialist basis he attempted to abolish "political Catholicism," and

further to substitute for Roman Catholicism a form of German Catholicism which was to put the State before the Vatican, and conform to the racial theory of the regime. Political Catholicism was successfully abolished, but the attempt to change the basis of Catholicism as such has altogether failed.

2. For the Germany of the future and the continuance of the regime an attack was made upon Catholic teaching in the schools. In this the Reich was successful. There is no doubt that hundreds of thousands of young people are being brought up in an atmosphere entirely alien to Christian doctrine. Their minds are centred upon war, to the peril of European peace and their own salvation. How far-reaching the effects will be, remains to be seen: but they may well be appalling.

3. In the matter of the clergy, all attempts to discredit them failed dismally.

4. Among the laity, the persecution as a whole has increased and not diminished their fervour. In Bavaria, it is true, seven thousand in the past two years have signed forms whereby they declare their breaking away from the Catholic Church; but throughout Germany as a whole the Faith has benefited from the suffering it has been through.

It is now nine years since the parish priest of Kirschausen preached his sermon and the battle began. Since that day, the National-Socialist state, with all the material power and the glory,

has used its resources to effect a change in the belief of Catholics. It has scored one success—over the children.



## VIII

### THE NATIONAL-SOCIALIST'S REPLY

THE National-Socialist Party did not enter into this struggle with the Church just for the fun of the thing. The influence brought to bear on organized religion was not a subsidiary point in the Party programme: it was felt, reasonably enough, that the Third Reich could not show a genuinely united front to the world so long as there was Church opposition, or disunity among the Churches themselves. Unity, complete unity, was something that Hitler himself passionately and sincerely desired. To this day he declares he has never had any intention of attacking the Churches themselves. All that he has attempted to do, he claims, has been to bring the Churches into line with National-Socialism. If he really believed that this could be done without coercion, he was wrong. The methods used from the start point rather to the belief that he realized that only by some form of intimidation could he hope for success.

It is important to realize, however, that to this day the Party denies both coercion and intimidation. In so far as the Church was punished, it suffered for its own sins. It asked for what it got. But that it was at any point persecuted, that at any time the State took the initiative in hurting the Church—this is hotly denied by the Party.

Here, before I go any further, I should like to pay a tribute to the courtesy with which inquiries are treated at the Party headquarters in Munich, and the trouble taken over the reply. At the Propaganda Ministry in Berlin, there is the same courtesy, but none of the efficiency in delivering statistics. At Munich a great deal of trouble was gone into to furnish answers to certain questions which are perhaps not very often put.

At Munich you are first of all referred to certain statements made by the Party leaders: as for instance the speech made by the Führer in March 1933, in which he said:

“The Party never had the intention, and it has not the intention now, of engaging in any kind of hostilities against Christianity in Germany. Our aim has been quite the opposite. . . . By concluding a Concordat with the Catholic Church that Party has sought to establish a state of affairs which would be beneficial to both sides and of a permanent character. . . .”

Reichsminister Kerrl: “The struggle between the Church and the State was never based on religious problems. The Party and the State would never dream of founding a ‘State religion’ or State Church.”

Adolf Hitler, January 30, 1939:

“Among the outcries against Germany raised to-day in the so-called democracies is the assertion

that National-Socialist Germany is an anti-religious State. I therefore wish to make the following solemn declaration to the whole German nation:

" 1. No-one in Germany has hitherto been persecuted for his religious views, nor will anyone be persecuted on that account.

" 2. The National-Socialist State has since January 30, 1933, through its State organs, placed the following sums accruing from public taxes at the disposal of both Churches:

financial year 1933 ... RM. 130 million

financial year 1934 ... RM. 170 million

financial year 1935 ... RM. 250 million

financial year 1936 ... RM. 320 million

financial year 1937 ... RM. 400 million

financial year 1938 ... RM. 500 million

" To the above sums must be added approximately RM. 85 million per annum of additional payments made by the various German states, and a further RM. 7 million per annum from the parishes and parish unions.

" Incidentally, the Churches are the biggest property owners in the country after the State itself. The value of agricultural and forestry properties owned by them exceeds RM. 10 milliards, and their income therefrom is probably more than RM. 300 million per annum. . . . Moreover the Church in the National-Socialist State receives favourable treatment in many tax matters. . . . It is

therefore a piece of impertinence—to put it mildly—for foreign politicians of all people to talk about hostility to religion in the Third Reich. If, however, the German Churches really should regard this position as unbearable, the National-Socialist State would be at any time prepared to make a clear separation between Church and State such as prevails in France, America and other countries.

“ I should only like to ask this question: What sums have France, England or America paid to their Churches through the State within the same period of time?

“ 3. The National-Socialist State has neither closed any Church nor prevented any service being held, nor has it ever influenced the form of a church service. It has neither interfered with the doctrinal teaching nor with the creed of any denomination. But—the National-Socialist State will ruthlessly make clear to those of the clergy who, instead of being God's ministers, regard it as their mission to speak insultingly of our present Reich, its organizations or its leaders, that no-one will tolerate a destruction of this State, and that clergymen who place themselves beyond the pale of the law will be called to account before the law like any other citizen. Let it be mentioned however that there are tens of thousands of clergymen of all denominations who fulfil their ecclesiastical duties just as well or probably better than the political agitators,

without ever coming into conflict with the laws of the State. The State considers their protection its task, the destruction of the enemies of the State its duty.

“4. The National-Socialist State is neither prudish nor deceitful. There are however certain moral principles adherence to which is in the interests of the biological health of the nation, and with which we tolerate no tampering. Pederasty and sexual offences against children are punishable by law in this State no matter who commits such crimes. . . . When . . . priests are guilty of such crimes they are, according to law, sentenced to terms of imprisonment or hard labour. It is no concern of ours if priests break their other vows such as chastity, etc. Not a single word about that has ever been published in our press. For the rest, this State has only once interfered in the inner organization of the Churches. This happened in 1933 when I myself attempted to unite the hopelessly disrupted Protestant Regional Churches in Germany into one large and powerful Evangelical Reich Church. The attempt failed owing to the opposition of some Regional Bishops. In consequence no further efforts were made. . . .

“There can only be political reasons for other countries, and for certain democratic statesmen in particular, to take up cudgels on behalf of individual German clergymen, for these same statesmen were

silent when hundreds of thousands of priests were butchered or burnt in Russia. They were silent when in Spain tens of thousands of priests and nuns were massacred with bestial cruelty and burnt alive. . . .

“ Let one thing be borne in mind : we shall protect the German clergy in their capacity as God’s ministers, but we shall destroy members of the clergy who are the enemies of the German Reich.”

(Although as far as possible it is only fair to let this National-Socialist defence speak for itself, it is important to point out that the financial figures in the speech above are given without the fact, not always realized outside Germany, that they come very largely from the faithful themselves, every one of whom must pay a Church tax to the State.)

Verbally, the authorities at Munich themselves speak to the inquirer on the following lines: “ After all, in Germany the State pays the Church. Is it not fair to demand at least loyalty in civil matters from the Church in return?

“ Further, the State surely has the right to expect that among the nation’s spiritual leaders there should be no open, baneful opposition to the State’s intentions. How for instance can a Church be absolutely loyal to the government when that Church is taking its orders from Rome? That is the trouble with the Catholic Church. The National-Socialist wants everyone to be a good German, a

German above all things: how can you be that if you are taking orders from an Italian? No-one would be so foolish as to try and kill the Catholic Church, but surely it is not unreasonable to ask it here to be a German Catholic Church?

“ If all the stories you hear about Catholic persecution are true, how is it that the churches are fuller than ever? Even the number of priests is increasing. In 1932 there were 11,540 parishes with 21,258 secular priests. By 1935 the parishes had *increased* by 140 and the number of priests by 700. If National-Socialism were out to kill the Church, do you think we should have allowed that? Does that sound like persecution?

“ In Germany, priests and religious orders actually suffer less disability than in other countries. The Jesuits are tolerated in Germany, but not in Switzerland. In Germany religious students are exempt from military service, in France they are not. In Germany the State pays for religious teaching, in America it doesn't give a penny.

“ The number of theological students, as you will have read in the *Schwarze Korps*, is also increasing. We are not afraid to publish the figures—4,632 in 1933, 5,277 in 1935-36, and over 6,000 in 1938. Does that sound to you like persecution?

“ The situation is perfectly simple. The National-Socialist State demands absolute unity. This unity is threatened by the attitude of the Catholic Church,

and in particular by ecclesiastics who take it upon themselves to abuse the privilege of the pulpit for the purpose of insulting the regime. We admit that a number of these men have been imprisoned—but wouldn't you in Britain do the same? Would a priest be allowed to defame the King in the pulpit of Westminster Cathedral?

"Priests are paid to be spiritual advisers, and spiritual advisers they must remain. It is not their job to be politicians: that is our job.

"There you have the whole problem—and its solution."

There undoubtedly is the problem: but the solution, under the present claims of National-Socialism, is not one that the Church can accept. The State, by demanding the totality of the German people, body and soul, asks for something that the Church cannot give up.

It is, however, vital to have a clear idea of the National-Socialist's argument if only to realize how far Germany still is from a solution. The Party would not have been logical if it had not demanded the partial submission of the Church: the Church would not have been true to itself if it had not resisted.

The Concordat was an attempt to bridge a gulf too wide, too deep, for any compromise. It is curious that its futility was not apparent to the men who framed it. It was a brave, hopeless attempt to



make National-Socialism change its spots. The tragedy of the struggle is that both sides are right and logical in their beliefs. Both are uncompromising. Both, to be genuinely successful, demand a thing that they cannot share—the soul of the German people.

Meanwhile it is important to understand that millions of National-Socialists genuinely and honestly believe that it is Catholicism which has broken faith, Catholicism that treacherously opposes the advance of the new Germany: and that if anybody broke the terms of the Concordat, it was the Church.

In Germany now there reigns an uneasy peace: but the struggle for the soul of its people is not yet over.

•

PART II

PROTESTANT GERMANY

•



## IX

### POST-WAR PROTESTANTISM

ANYBODY who for his sins has had to report a boxing match for a newspaper knows that it is hard enough to follow, and later describe accurately, the movements, feints, attacks, retreats and strategy of the contest. To try to report a "free-for-all," in the course of which some of the contestants drop out and others appear to change sides, is to invite disaster as a reporter.

Roman Catholicism and National-Socialism fought out in Germany a struggle that in one sense at least was perfectly straightforward. Here you had two opposed philosophies, each compact, well-organized and determined, the one frankly anxious to subdue the other, the second as stubbornly defending its rights against the first. If the struggle pursued a course that was at times tortuous and a little hard to follow, at least there were never more than two opponents in the ring.

But with Protestantism, the difficulty in Germany has been to untangle not only the opposition of the State, but the oppositions working inside the Protestant Church itself. Instead of two opponents in the ring you have a number: certainly four, and occasionally five. For just as at the outset there

were struggles inside the Church, so even as late as 1936 and 1937 there were violent differences of opinion among Protestant denominations as to the degree to which the State should be opposed.

Only one writer up to the present time has made the various Protestant positions held between 1933 and 1939 at all easily distinguishable, and that is the Dean of Chichester, in *The Struggle for Religious Freedom in Germany*. Other writers, such as Barth, the Swiss, have defined with particular clarity special aspects of the case: just as, at times, certain National-Socialist leaders other than Reichsminister Kerrl have also made their position clear. But the Dean of Chichester, in his masterly untangling of all threads of opinion, stands out from the rest; and anyone anxious for the full story, here too sketchily described, can do no better than make a study of his exceptional book.

. . . . .

Protestantism before the war had been in a bad way in Luther's country. "The fire of Protestantism burnt low in Protestant Germany," says the Dean himself. "Protestant theology," says Piper,<sup>1</sup> "was without a real theological basis, without connection with active church life and in social isolation." Only a small proportion of the 40,000,000 Evangelicals went regularly to church. "The

<sup>1</sup> *Recent Developments in German Protestantism*.

gospel of direct inspiration and of its corollary 'free interpretation,' and even still more, the under-estimation of the social and ecclesiastical element in religious life combined with an aggressive German individualism, had estranged the Evangelicals more and more from their church and had caused even those who remained faithful to it to regard it more as a social institution for the defence of morality and order than the mystic body of Christ."<sup>1</sup>

After the war there took place a phenomenon already noted: namely, that whereas in the victorious countries there was a temporary falling away from organized religion, in Germany there was a new recognition of the need of a religious faith. Millions were not quite sure what form that religion should take: they were merely conscious of an immense spiritual thirst. As no leader arose to bind them to any one particular faith, they turned to the idea of Germany itself. The country, the Fatherland, became the undefined religion of millions of souls, and heroism became the highest virtue. Here, already distinguishable, were the seeds of Hitler's *Weltanschauung*.

This deep almost mystic belief of the German people in the destiny of the *Volk* tended to turn away, naturally, from purely intellectual concepts, and from the various organized churches. War had brought tragedy to their doorstep, and they

<sup>1</sup> *Nazism versus Christianity*, Mario Bendiscioli.

demanding a practical reply, a philosophy of the earth. Here again, in shadowy outline, can be distinguished the "Blood and Soil" concept of National-Socialism which was soon to satisfy so many million souls.

Thus between 1918 and 1933, although the feeling for religion was far deeper than it had been before the war, organized Protestantism found itself, if anything, at a disadvantage. The Weimar Republic, which in 1919 had guaranteed absolute freedom of faith throughout the Reich, and thus nominally cut away the territorial boundaries into which Germany had previously been divided, was a help and a joy to Catholicism since it meant freedom from restriction: but to Protestantism it was a handicap, leaving millions free to wander into curious theological fields of their own finding.

During those years official Protestantism found itself attacked on three sides.

First, the new liberal or rationalist theology which ran away from pure doctrine and staked its claim entirely upon a form of historical criticism.

Second, the anti-conformistic attitude of the Free Churches, who in the name of freedom actually condemned the official churches from which they had sprung.

Third, various post-war ideological movements—and Socialism in particular—which condemned the churches as out-moded, as exploiters of the workers, and as founded on a myth—substituting

themselves for this myth the reality of Germany herself.

In the early 1930's therefore, there was already this great, unharnessed, semi-religious restlessness, believing deeply but vaguely in the greatness of German blood and the glory of German soil. Satan himself, if he was anything, was anti-German. To these millions Hitler's message came more as a religious than a political deliverance. National-Socialism first echoed and then defined their belief that God had chosen the German people "to save the world by loyalty to its own soul." When the Führer demanded that they should subordinate everything to loyalty, he only demanded what millions were eager, even anxious, to give. Menaced by a Communism that was anti-Christ, the people saw in Hitler a messenger from God sent explicitly to Germany—to wage in their country's name a war, a practical Christian war, on godlessness and materialism. In the Party's insistence upon the divine values of blood and soil and race, millions felt sure that they had been granted at long last, after all those years, the practical answer to their prayers.

As has been stressed before, it is vital to realize that the struggle that was to ensue was not so much a struggle between Church and State as a struggle between religions: and of these religions, Protestantism was, unfortunately for itself, the only one not united in its own cause.



. . . . .

Numerically the position of Protestantism in 1933 was very strong.

Two-thirds of the entire population of Germany—40,000,000 souls—were members of the Evangelical Churches. For the most part they belonged to one of three great divisions: the United Prussian, the Lutheran or the Reformed. Geographically they still lived mostly in central Germany or the north. Thus for instance the United Prussian Church had 20,000,000 followers alone. Brandenburg, Pomerania, Mecklenberg, Holstein and Saxony were all Protestant. Protestants predominated in Wurttemberg and Hesse, and shared the Palatinate and Silesia equally with Catholicism.

Protestantism still found its typical expression in the *Landeskirchen*, or official regional churches. They were the basis of its religious life, which still carried on something of the territorial characteristics of pre-Weimar days. There were twenty-eight of these *Landeskirchen*. From the point of view of doctrine they were for the most part either strictly Lutheran or sternly Reformed. Since the war, however, despite the dislike that many of them felt for any form of constitutionalism, a number had begun to pattern themselves, in self-defence, on the Catholic model. In the south, as might be expected, the laity had more say in church affairs than in the more authoritarian north.

So much for the official Protestant Churches as they stood when Hitler came to power. Their most enthusiastic followers could not claim for them a sense of unity. They differed profoundly among one another in their conception of church government, in their attitude towards Bishoprics, and of course on the form of service. And already, within their own framework, a fourth important, unofficial new Church-within-the-Church was being formed to answer and satisfy the Blood-and-Soil longings of a steadily growing minority : a minority which was to play a decisive part in the years to follow. These were the *Deutsche Christen*, the "German Christians."

The offspring of a similar Movement founded in 1930, the Deutsche Christen were born in 1932, and asserted that for national revival "a united, strong, and vital Church of the people," and a "popular preaching of the Gospel which would speak to the German soul, and a German Church in which the people would feel themselves in their element"<sup>1</sup> were essential. They adopted Nazi methods and Nazi propaganda. They proposed the end of the small churches, and their absorption into one national church of the people. Blessed by Hitler (who indeed gave them their name) and led by a Pastor Hossenfelder, a former soldier, they had already planned a vigorous campaign for the uniting of the warring elements among Protestant denomin-

<sup>1</sup> Von der Heydt: *Die Ziele der Deutschen Christen*.

ations. "God speaks in Blood and Volk a more powerful language than he does in the idea of humanity," proclaimed Herr Hossenfelder.

How many belonged to this sect it is impossible to say. They were recruited from Protestantism itself, and were prepared to strike the moment the Party (to whom they naturally belonged) achieved power. Certain it is that by 1933, when their moment came, they were already numerous and well organized.

## X

### ENTER THE REICHSBISCHOF

Just as it had been greeted with relief by a large number of Catholics, so Hitler's assumption of power in 1933 was hailed with genuine enthusiasm by a large proportion of the Evangelical Church. The Church saw in him a protector of Christianity, a man who would drive away the cloud of Communism, crush the spectre of uncontrolled materialism, and outlaw the dangerous godlessness of a Germany fumbling to find her feet again after the appalling tragedy of the war and the miseries of the post-war years. It is always important to realize that both Catholicism and Protestantism welcomed Hitler in 1933. They were prepared to be loyal to him and to help him in his tremendous task of reconstruction. They assumed that they would be given a part to play, and they were anxious to play it. Despite every sign to the contrary, they could not believe that their faith would be in danger under the new regime, or that they would be asked to bend the knee to State idolatry. The Evangelical Church in particular looked forward with optimism to the years ahead.

Their optimism seemed to receive its confirmation when on February 1, the new Government pledged

itself to "take Christianity under its protection as the basis of our whole moral code." Again, in its official programme of March 23rd, 1933, it stressed its recognition of the fact that "in the two Christian creeds lie the most important factors for the preservation of the German people." Even its promise to make of Protestantism one single, undivided Church was regarded without misgiving. They themselves, after all, were anxious for a greater unity than obtained at the time.

The Government, having given Protestantism an approving pat on the back both in February and in March, swung round in April and struck it in the face.

During the first week of April the *Deutsche Christen*, holding a Congress in Berlin, came to the rapid conclusion that German Protestantism was quite incapable of doing anything towards unity by itself. It had in any case compromised itself, the *Deutsche Christen* declared, by flirting both with Marxism and with Roman Catholicism. They therefore demanded, on their own, a National *Reichskirche*, from which everyone with any Jewish blood was to be rigorously excluded, to be ruled by a Leader who understood that Blood and Soil came before the outworn tenets of Christian dogma. To the accomplishment and realization of this People's Church they turned to the Führer. It must be organized, they said, by the Party if it were to be

truly national. As the *Deutsche Christen* were under the direct patronage of the Führer there was little doubt as to the inspiration behind the Congress.

The Aryan paragraph in this new proposal, and the implications of a new creed in which racialism superseded Christian internationalism, drew an immediate and sturdy reaction from Protestantism. Dr. Otto Dibelius of Brandenburg (who was later to suffer for his temerity) retorted that the Gospel must be put before political ideologies. Feeling was aroused throughout the Evangelical Church. There was created, from among Protestants of all denominations, a body of men united in their abhorrence of a Christianity more political than Christian.

This body was soon to develop into what became known as the Confessional Front. Just as the *Deutsche Christen* were to be the shock troops of the revolt against genuine Protestantism, so the Confessional Front, on which Lutherans worked side by side with pastors of the Reformed and United Prussian Churches, was to be the first line of defence of the Evangelical Church. They were called Confessionals simply because they put the Confession of Faith before any ideological belief. Certain of the *Landeskirchen* and some of the Free Churches worked independently of the Confessionals throughout the struggle: but it was against what became known as the Confessional leaders that the State made its

claims and waged its war. They took the same stand as Catholicism in so far as they refused to accept or acknowledge the assumption that National-Socialism was a movement of God, whose decisions over-rode the teaching of the Old Testament and the Sermon on the Mount.

Meanwhile the three great Protestant divisions, the United Prussian, the Lutheran and the Reformed, perfectly prepared to do everything possible to bring about a greater unity among themselves despite the taunts of the *Deutsche Christen*, took action. The Evangelical Church Federation gave its President, Kapler, authority to carry out the necessary re-organization. Dr. Kapler formed a Committee of Three, summoning to his side Dr. Marahrens, the Lutheran, and Dr. Hess of the Reformed Church. Between them they were to draw up some form of unification acceptable to the Evangelical Church as a whole.

At this point appears for the first time the pale, unhappy Ludwig Müller.

Müller, in return for obscure services rendered, had been appointed by Hitler as "Protector" of the *Deutsche Christen*. He had been a Naval Chaplain during the war, had first met Hitler in 1926, had become an ardent National-Socialist and no doubt sincerely believed that the Führer was fulfilling a divine mission. He had worked under Hossenfelder when the *Deutsche Christen*

were formed, and been appointed Hitler's private religious expert when the Party obtained power. He was now quietly further appointed by Hitler to join the Committee of Three.

Müller joined the Committee on May 4. On May 26 a manifesto was published by the Committee calling for a United German Evangelical Church, founded on the Confession, of which the various *Landeskirchen* would be an integral part, and co-workers. At its head there was to be a *Reichsbischof*, or Government-Bishop, supported by a spiritual ministry. There should be beneath him a National Synod which would look after the various elections, including the election of the *Reichsbischof*.

So far, so good. But when the question arose as to who should be the first *Reichsbischof*, agreement broke down. Müller suggested himself. He could think of no-one more suitable—after all, he pointed out, was he not a good National-Socialist, an experienced fighter and the confidant of the Führer: the very reasons why his appointment, or even the thought of his appointment, shocked the Committee.

Indeed the entire Evangelical Church by this time had received the first of many shocks to come. If the Lutherans disliked this idea of authoritarian rule, which clearly smacked of Papacy, the Reformed Churches hated it. Müller's suggestion was unanimously turned down. Eventually a man remote from politics, von Bodelschwingh, was chosen, and



the choice was confirmed by large majorities of Church representatives.

This, in turn, maddened the *Deutsche Christen*.

On May 27, Müller, frankly declaring that the war was on, said in a broadcast speech that the electors "had not heard the voice of God." The *Deutsche Christen* opened a violent propaganda campaign designed to show that the Churches were working against the State—their rejection of Müller a clear proof of their antagonism to National-Socialism. It was therefore all the more important, declared the *Deutsche Christen*, that some form of absorption of the various Protestant churches into a State Church should be carried through, for the sake of Germany.

Not long later the State seized the opportunity to appoint a Dr. Jaeger, a fervent follower of the *Deutsche Christen*, as head of the Evangelical Church in Prussia "to restore order." This he did by importing numbers of Secret Police and arresting a number of pastors. Bodelschwingh, bewildered and bemused by the violent swing of events, resigned. By the end of June, when Jaeger had largely "restored order" in Prussia, Müller appointed himself head of the *Kirchenbund*. On July 7, it was announced that he had become head of the Church of the old Prussian Union. Only one detail remained—he had yet, somehow, to be elected Reichsbischof by the Synod. National-Socialism always prefers to

achieve its ends by methods superficially constitutional.

This was achieved by methods already familiar to Catholics in the Reich. A campaign of propaganda, mingled with suppression of dissent, was entered upon. In Prussia, protests were not even allowed to be read. By September a Synod had been born that was predominantly National-Socialist. Hitler himself took part, and appealed to the "patriotism" of his people. And on September 21st, 1933, at Wittenberg, cradle of Lutheranism, the first German National Synod elected Müller *Reichsbischof* by a huge and ardent majority.

"The political church struggle is now over," announced the new *Reichsbischof*. "The struggle for the soul of the people now begins."

There he was right.

Under the new Constitution, which had been announced in July, the *Reichsbischof* assumed all the administrative functions of the old organs of the Churches. Under him he had his Ministry of Religion whose task was almost purely executive—they had to see that the *Reichsbischof's* wishes were duly carried out. No real power was left to the Synod.

To German Protestantism, this meant not only a most unpleasant innovation, but a crop of new problems within itself. Thus whole sections of it

disapproved violently of the idea of Bishops at all. Any form of dogmatic solidarity, too, was repugnant to men who believed in interpreting the Bible personally: and to make matters worse, the new dogma was not even Christian dogma. Further, the fact that it had been considered desirable to have as *Reichsbischof* a man who had never claimed to be a theologian set nobody's mind at rest as to the decisions he might later make. It was perfectly obvious that the Constitution of the united German Evangelical Church of 1933 bore an ominous resemblance to the Constitution of the National-Socialist State. If Müller had not actually been created Pope, he had been appointed something ominously resembling a Führer: or at the very least, a powerful political Cardinal.

Protestantism, believing firmly that the Church is governed in the last resort, not by Pastors but by the Gospel, found itself suddenly in the hands of a Pastor with power, apparently, to revise the Gospels in favour of a new and patently false Protestantism. The Reformed Church, of course, as descendants of Calvin, rejected Bishops altogether. They had always believed that the Church should be ruled by—or at least have as organs of expression—the Presbytery and the Synod. Under a *Reichsbischof* who was virtually a Dictator, there would be no Presbytery, and the Synod had lost all significance. They were thus even more indignant than the

Lutherans, and in the days to follow were to supply the spearhead of Protestant protest and defence.

For a short while there was no protest. It seemed as if the Evangelical Church had been stunned by the sudden success of the State. The election of the *Reichsbischof* by the National Synod was greeted with an ominous calm: a calm that lasted through the summer, a calm that boded ill for the unity of the new National Church, a calm half sullen, half mystified, as much bewildered as resentful. Indeed it was not seriously broken until out of the blue came the shattering blasphemies uttered in the Sports Palace in Berlin on November 13 of that year.

. . . . .

The speaker was a Dr. Krause, the occasion a demonstration organized by the *Deutsche Christen*. The purpose of the speech was to make the National-Socialist masses feel more "at home" in the new National German Church. This is how Dr. Krause set about it.

"We must get rid of the Old Testament," he said, as blandly as if this were no more difficult than the isolation of a minor epidemic. "The Old Testament has rightly been called the most questionable book in the whole history of the world—it does not, cannot, fit with a racially correct Christianity. A radical revision, too, must be made of the whole theology of the Rabbi Paul.

"We need no God on a distant throne, but Jesus

the fighting hero. The places in Germany which have been drenched with holy blood (a reference to those spots where National-Socialists had fallen in the various Putsches) mean more to us than distant Palestine. . . .”

And so on. With the Aryan paragraph stressed again.

The storm broke.

It broke first in Lutheran circles. Dr. Meiser, in Bavaria, after denouncing Krause's sentiments, made preparation for collective action. *Reichsbischof* Müller suspended Krause. Some of the *Deutsche Christen* even left their own group.

But by far the most significant reaction was the formation of a group of pastors, who, now certain that the position had become intolerable, decided to take the responsibility of speaking on their own, cutting through all the usual formalities even of Church constitution. Called the League of Defence of the Pastors, it at once mustered 3,000 members who chose for their head an ex-submarine commander, popular pastor of the Berlin suburb of Dahlem. His name was Niemöller.

From their pulpits throughout Germany these pastors denounced the new paganism. They sent to *Reichsbischof* Müller an ultimatum demanding that he should resign from his post, that all those who had failed in their duty to the Christian faith should be dismissed, that ecclesiastical dignitaries

who had been foisted on the Evangelical Church should be deprived of their posts and that there should be once again full liberty to preach the Gospel. The Lutheran leaders sent a similar protest.

Müller, for the time being, was cornered. He dismissed his spiritual ministry, postponed his own enthronement, and admitted Krause's errors. He took care, however, not to dismiss himself.

It looked as if the activities of the *Deutsche Christen* were at an end. Hossenfelder, their head, followed Krause and the spiritual ministry. The protests of the pastors had the full support of the Evangelical masses. Protestantism had certainly won the first round.

But at the head of the National German Church, *Reichsbischof* Müller, pale, determined and unloved, remained.

Even now the real fight had scarcely begun.

. . . . .

## XI

### EXIT THE REICHSBISCHOF

THE second phase, the struggle for Germany's Protestant Youth, resulted in a clear-cut victory for the Party.

Protestantism had played a fine part in organizing its young people since the war. Inheriting the best qualities of the *Wandervögel* and the *Pfadfinder*, the *Evangelische Jugend Deutschlands* had a membership of well over 700,000. They comprised members of all the Protestant denominations, and were engaged in just those healthy activities which (as with Catholicism) were later to be judged as alien to the unity of the State: that is to say they organized tours, rambles, athletic meetings and the rest of it, which were in the first place not actual Church services, and in the second place encroached upon the new monopoly of the *Hitler-Jugend*.

In June 1933, Baldur von Schirach had been appointed supreme head of National-Socialist youth. By the formation of the *Hitler-Jugend* a means had been found of knitting into a compact form the young people so necessary to the future of the Party. As has been already pointed out, this organization has done wonders, physically, for young Germany. It has helped enormously in the resurrection of the

Reich. It is still, at this moment, building up a Germany physically far finer than Britain, far finer, perhaps, than any other great world power. On a foundation of terrific patriotism allied to a mystic belief in the divine mission of the German people, is being developed a body of young people who, denied all form of spiritual guidance, are convinced that only through German supremacy can the world be saved.

Even in its infancy, the danger that this new movement presented to organized Christianity was clearly realized by the Evangelical leaders. Even then it was obvious that it leant more towards the racial doctrines of Rosenberg than any recognized Christian dogma. The heads of the Protestant youth movement therefore approached Hitler with a view to assuring the independence of the *Evangelische Jugend Deutschlands*. To their immense relief Baldur von Schirach promised that the various organizations already in existence would be allowed to maintain their independence: and he assured Stange, the leader of Protestant Youth, that no form of absorption into the Party movement was so much as contemplated.

That was in June 1933.

In July, however, the whole of the Protestant Youth organizations was placed under the jurisdiction of *Reichsbischof* Müller. First, in order to "protect" them, Müller decreed that no member



of the one movement could join the other: *Hitler-Jugend* and the *Evangelische Jugend Deutschlands* must remain separate entities, neither encroaching upon the other's sphere of action. He coupled this however with a decree denying to the Protestant organization any activity whatsoever other than purely religious: that is to say he smashed, with one signature, almost every activity in which they took part. The whole purpose and point of the great Protestant organization had been to keep its youth together *outside* the church: to organize all those forms of outside activity on a decent basis and to bring up its young people in a healthy, clean physical atmosphere.

Stange, defending the Evangelical Youth so long as was possible, found himself now up against a von Schirach who in the meantime had come to the conclusion that Confessional Youth Groups of any kind, be they Catholic or Protestant, constituted a danger to the State. Declaring that he himself was neither Protestant nor Catholic, but first and foremost a German, von Schirach derided activities that put either religion before the glory of Blood and Soil. Faced with this impasse, Müller, clinging as always to what rags of constitutionalism he could find, set up a Committee to consider the whole problem. Its conclusion was never in doubt.

There were the usual protests, as usual unavailing.

The *Hitler-Jugend* had already decided that one

of its tasks was the absorption of any rival organization that put Christ before the State, and von Schirach had publicly denied the Confessional front any rights whatsoever in the matter of youth. One of the great aspects of the *Hitler-Jugend*, he pointed out, was that it contributed to the unity of the Reich through its power to "transcend Confessional differences."

By December the betrayal was complete. The "H-J" had obtained the monopoly in sport and political education that was essential to it. On December 21, the Reichsbischof wired to Hitler to the effect that he had "incorporated" the Evangelical Youth in the *Hitler-Jugend*. Stange, who throughout these months had struggled unceasingly for the rights of his Church, was dismissed for attempting to sabotage the Führer's work of unification.

Thus in the first twelve months of the new regime, Protestantism found its youth handed over—behind its back, by its own *Reichsbischof*—to the care of National-Socialism. Left with no weapon with which it could fight the decision, it had no option but to accept the inevitable. Writers who criticize the Evangelical Church for its apparent feebleness in the matter of its own youth do not suggest any alternative by which it might have prevented this blow. The Party held all the cards. In so far as the move was made by its own

constitutional chief, Protestantism was powerless to prevent it. Any internal revolution at that moment could have done nothing but weaken its position: and at best could only have postponed for a short time the eventual dissolution of the *Evangelische Jugend*.

. . . . .

Meanwhile, by the turn of the year 1933, a new force had arisen which to a certain extent was to replace the shock troops of the *Deutsche Christen*. This was the "German Faith" Movement.

Their attitude was similar in many respects to that of the *Deutsche Christen*. The previous July, when they had first applied for recognition, they had announced:

"The men and women of the German Faith . . . stand firm on the ground of the Third Reich with the Führer, and turn to him in serious distress of conscience.

"We pledge ourselves to a German Faith which has its guiding principle in the religious patrimony of the German people, whose creative piety has continued as a living force for over a thousand years. We declare that tracing our roots to a divine source of our German origin, we are responsible to it and to the German people of a German faith."<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the summer of 1933, the German

<sup>1</sup> *Nazism versus Christianity*, Mario Bendiscoli, p. 73.

Faith had worked vigorously for a place in the sun. It had organized festivals in honour of spring and the equinoxes which were recognizable parodies of the Sacraments. It had coupled the allure of neopaganism with radio and press enticements based on ritual glories of blood and soil.

By the spring of 1934 this Movement had grown enormously, had secured the approval of such Party leaders as Ley, Baldur von Schirach and Rosenberg (whose doctrines it followed) and was established as a sturdy, powerful organization with money behind it. It was open only to men and women entirely free of Jewish blood, who did not belong to secret societies, who were "neither Jesuits nor Freemasons," and who did not belong to any other communion or church. The message of the German Faith was a bugle call for the rallying of all those Germans who, whatever their other merits, had, so far as they knew, no Faith. Its mission was defined as the re-birth of the divine purpose of the German people, and its badge was the sun on a background of purest blue. Its leader was a man called Hauer, its main exponent Bergmann. Bergmann, among his Twenty-Five Theses of the German Religion, says:

"The German has a religion which springs vitally from his intuition, his feelings and his thoughts which are associated with his race" (No. I).

"The Christian ideas about sin, the Fall and the Atonement are not religious sentiments, but the artificial products of the human imagination" (XIV).

"The philosophy of the German Religion is heroic. It is based on the three old German virtues of valour, chivalry and fidelity, which are all sprung from honour" (XX).

"We members of the German Faith visualize the divine in religious figures seen in the perspective of the laws of life—in a male heroic figure and a maternal feminine figure . . . ." (XXIII).

Bergmann, in an earlier book, maintains that all religious life is fundamentally sexual. God Himself is only a sublimation of thoughts originally sexual, gilded artificially by tints skilfully woven through history. "To put it bluntly," he says, "woman is the god of the human beast."<sup>1</sup>

This rigmarole would not be worth quoting were it not for the fact that it drew thousands of believers to its side, and was destined to become an increasing and not a diminishing force in the Church struggle. It illustrates with pitiful insistence the spiritual starvation of a nation whose people, it is still possible to believe, are fundamentally sane and good. It is important, above all, as the Faith which commands the allegiance of the man still in supreme control of German Youth, as well as the man at the

<sup>1</sup> Bergmann: *Spirit of Knowledge and Maternal Spirit* (1932).

head of the Reich's Ministry for Cultural Affairs.

By 1934 the struggle between the *Reichskirche* and the Confessional Front had plainly come to a head. Krause, with his sublime nonsense at the Sports Palace in Berlin, had defined beyond misunderstanding the gulf that lay between the two outlooks.

In January 1934, Müller took a desperate step when he "forbade the use of religion for party polemics," and suppressed all criticism of ecclesiastical government under severe penalties, which included suspension.

This was another mistake. It roused the Lutherans in the Confessional Front to a fury. From every one of their churches, the following Sunday, was read a statement including the words: "Before God and this Christian community, we protest against the fact that the *Reichsbischof* with his ordinances seriously menaces the authority of those who in the name of their conscience and their community cannot look on in silence at the havoc that is going on in the Church, and also against the fact that he has put in force fresh laws which are hostile to the Faith. . . . Even in our dealings with the *Reichsbischof* we observe the command: You must obey God rather than men. . . ."

Throughout the Evangelical Church there was by this time an active spirit of revolt. The outspokenness of the Confessional Front had brought

home to millions of Germans otherwise not disturbed by storms within the Church, that the entire structure of their faith was in danger from without. Hitler himself realized that the situation had reached a point at which some form of explosion harmful to the unity of the Reich was not merely conceivable, but probable. He sent for the leaders of the opposition and asked them to discuss the matter personally with him. They went with high hopes.

To this day it is difficult to discover what happened at that meeting. There was no mistaking the mood in which these pastors went to the interview: an optimism in the possibility of final settlement, but a firm scepticism and reserve in view of what the Church had already gone through. Some maintain that they were led into a trap, others that they were tricked after the event. All that is known for certain is that as a result of the talk an amazing *communiqué* was issued which announced to the public that the leaders of the Evangelical Churches had met the Chancellor, and had declared their unshakable confidence in the Third Reich and its Führer. It was also stated that they ranged themselves solidly behind the *Reichsbischof*!

That was that. Just as there are pieces of the Catholic-National-Socialist jigsaw which only the historian will be able to piece together, so here, in the Evangelical camp, is something in itself alto-

gether inexplicable in the light of events. All that was certain was that Hitler had obtained, somehow, another triumph over the Protestant Church. Its leaders had gone to the Führer united in their profound distaste for, and suspicion of, the *Reichsbischof*. They emerged, apparently, his most enthusiastic lieutenants.

Pastor Niemoller, voicing the sentiments of thousands of Protestants who felt that they had been betrayed, wrote publicly to the Bishop to say that he, for his part, would continue the struggle undaunted. On the 31st of the same month the leaders of the Pastors' Emergency League wrote a similar, but slightly milder, protest against behaviour which they were unable to explain and deeply deplored. No explanation was forthcoming from any member of the Evangelical deputation. Already Niemoller had been once arrested (in January, and released) and now his house was again visited by the Gestapo and all documents relating to the Pastors' Emergency League confiscated.

At Easter *Reichsbischof* Müller tried to make peace, in his fashion, with the Confessional Front. In a sermon given on Good Friday he pointed out that they must all admit that the Church had previously become a weak, middle-class affair, until God had sent the Führer to deliver the nation into unity. He therefore called on all the churches to "face the facts" and not to be "more pious than the Lord."



This offer the Emergency League rejected on April 5.

On April 22, the Confessional Front, weary of the shilly-shallying, issued a blunt declaration signed by members of all the denominations pointing out that the *Reichsbischof's* offers of peace had long ago been contradicted by facts, protesting against recent illegal treatment meted out to the Bishop of Württemberg, Dr. Wurm, and stressing that what they signed was a declaration "before the whole of Christendom" of the "constitutional Evangelical Church of Germany."

Never since the struggle began had the Confessional Front spoken so plainly: and never before had they made in the face of the *Reichskirche* their claim to represent the "constitutional" Evangelical Church of Germany. If there had been any doubt about their feeling before, there could be none now. By the terms in which they signed this declaration of April 22, they rejected not only the *Reichsbischof* himself, but the entire State structure of the new *Reichskirche*. In this declaration, Protestantism accepted the challenge of the State.

The Evangelical Church was, ironically enough, being driven into a form of unity by the activities of the State: but this unity consisted solely in antagonism to the State. Müller had been given the task of bringing together the various Protestant denominations—and he had succeeded only in making them

unanimous about the falseness of his own position. By the end of May the Confessional Front was no longer an expression used by the Party: it was an established fact. A Confessional Synod, driven to desperate expression by the course that events had taken, agreed that the unification—the true unification—of the German Evangelical Church could only come about by the word of God, in faith, through the Holy Ghost. In a published statement they appealed for support from every true Protestant community in Germany. They rejected, once and for all, the National-Socialist offer of absorption into a German National Church under a National-Socialist Bishop. They dotted the i's and crossed the t's of their previous protest. They were no longer prepared to co-operate with the *Reichsbischof* along lines proposed by the State.

Once again—deadlock.

. . . . .

Müller thought it over till August.

In August he retorted with a National Synod. At this he and Dr. Jaeger, who in the meantime had been assuming a greater degree of control in Church matters outside Prussia, inaugurated a new oath to be taken by all pastors of the Evangelical Church. Each pastor was to swear to be "true and obedient to the Leader of the German People and State, and dedicate himself to Germany with every sacrifice and service which became a German Evan-

gelical man." He was to accept conscientiously every order of the German Evangelical Church.

This naturally only aroused further resentment.

The day for installing Müller as *Reichsbischof* (which had been postponed until September) began to draw near; yet there was no sign of friendship between the *Reichsbischof* and the Church over which he was supposed to rule. Dr. Jaeger, exercising more and more power, organized intolerable treatment for Dr. Wurm and Dr. Meiser, both popular Bishops of the Confessional Front who had never disguised their suspicion of, and disgust towards, a National-Socialist Evangelical Church. The atmosphere, far from improving, grew steadily worse.

On September 23, 1934, when Müller was formally installed as *Reichsbischof* in Berlin amid a sea of banners, not a single Protestant Bishop who had been in office before 1933 attended the ceremony.

It was a peculiar scene. In the first place, the Bishop had never been consecrated. In the second place there was nobody present in the church but those members of the Party who had been ordered to be there. It was hung with Swastikas from end to end. The *Reichsbischof*, undaunted, recited the creed and received the insignia of his office. Only a handful of people listened to his inaugural sermon.

Meanwhile throughout the whole of the rest of Protestant Germany that morning the churches were packed. They had come together to pray for

the true Christianity that was being threatened by a false. They heard their pastors inveigh once more against a "hybrid Nordic Christian religion." Never before in history can the nominal head of a Church have been solemnly invested with the trappings of his high office while the vast majority of his followers were gathered elsewhere praying that their Church might be saved from his activities! It was a peculiar situation.

By October the revolt against the *Reichskirche* had gathered even greater force. Dr. Jaeger, to the immense relief of the Confessional Front, resigned. Once again Hitler himself saw the Bishops. He told them that he had no further interest in the matter: he had done what he could and they had let him down. From now on they were to solve their own problem for themselves. At long last it looked as if the State was going to leave the Church in peace. Müller himself had failed in his attempts to get an interview with the Führer—a sure sign that he had lost favour. Already more than a thousand pastors had suffered in some form or other from State or police intervention. Here, thought the Evangelical Church, is the Armistice.

*Reichsbischof* Müller, however, still stubbornly refused to resign. The Confessional Front formed a Provisional Church Government in case he should change his mind, and in the hope that he would.

Early in February 1935 the Provisional Church Government sent a form of ultimatum to Frick, and on the 27th Müller was at last granted an interview at Berchtesgaden. By the middle of March he had faded out completely as a force for evil: or indeed a force of any kind. But he clung to his title and was allowed to remain in his palace. His day, however, was done.

The Church imagined that it was on top at last.

On March 11, a statement drawn up by the Provisional Church Government was read aloud in all churches. It openly defied the tenets of the German Faith (referred to above), poured scorn on the heathenism of the press, and repudiated once again the Blood and Soil racialism of Rosenberg's Nordic fallacy.

This was too much. The State struck.

Seven hundred pastors, including Pastor Niemöller, were arrested and 5,000 others received visits from the Gestapo telling them exactly where they (and the State) stood. It was all done quietly. I was in Germany at the time, and knew nothing of it till my return to England. The Reich was too enthusiastic over the re-introduction of conscription to worry much over the arrest of a few clergymen. But for the Confessional Front it spelt tragedy.

After those years of struggle they had shaken off both Dr. Jaeger and the *Reichsbischof*. They had

made plain their determination to interpret the Scriptures in their traditional manner, and not to the tune of a political phase. They had fought for their rights against tremendous odds: and the Führer himself had assured them that he had no further interest in their struggle. They had been given the chance to work out their own formula for a Confessional and Christian unity. Here, almost at once, had come the bitter disillusionment.

Prayers were offered up in the churches for those pastors who were still in gaol. Further arrests followed. For the first time congregations learnt that their pastors were being introduced to the rigours of the Concentration Camp. The gloves which the *Reichsbischof* had worn so clumsily were off: they were up against the bare fists of the State.

On April 25, the vast Sports Palace in Berlin—where Krause had uttered his initial blasphemies, a place forbidden for Catholic or Protestant gatherings—was the scene of a vast demonstration organized by followers of the new German Faith. Blood and Soil was the theme. In what they hoped was the twilight of Christ, the speakers praised the dawn of a new glory greater than the old.

Exactly four weeks later a law was published which in effect put all legal questions arising in the Evangelical Church under a Special Bureau of the Ministry of the Interior: or more bluntly, the police. This violated the Constitution of Müller's *Reichskirche*,

Article 137 of the Constitution of the Reich, and Hitler's own promise of March 23rd, 1933.

By this decree the Evangelical Church lost overnight all its civil rights. It found itself face to face with the naked power of the totalitarian state.

## XII

### DR. KERRL IN CHARGE

DURING that spring and summer of 1935, when Protestantism first found itself face to face with the direct antagonism of the State, there were still fairly clearly defined groups taking part in the struggle: the Party, the German Faith and the *Deutsche Christen* against the Confessional Front (which included members of the United Prussian, Lutheran and Reformed Churches), certain Regional Evangelical Churches and here and there the voice of a Free Church Minister.

In the middle of July, Herr Hitler appointed his first Reichs Minister for Church Affairs.

Dr. Kerrl, the first (and present) holder of this difficult office, was formerly a lawyer and at that time a good Party man of ten years standing. He was a clear-cut and uncompromising opponent of the Confessional Front.

But from the moment of his appointment to the present time, the story of Protestantism's struggle for the Bible takes a new and more complicated turn. It began to lose that solidarity as a Church which the early years of the struggle had given it and which had earned it admiration all over the world. Traditional differences between the Lutheran,



Reformed and United Prussian Churches once again hindered the defence of the Gospel. At a time when one would have thought a solid front was essential, Protestantism became divided against itself. Already the Lutherans had begun to break away from the Provisional Church Government, reserving to themselves the right to make independent decisions concerning their relations with the State. By 1936 its own followers were forced to admit that the Evangelical Church was in a state of chaos. The pallid *Reichsbischof* had been so strong an irritant that he had at least succeeded in uniting the denominations against him: but now he was gone they reverted all too quickly to disintegrating differences within the structure of their own great body.

Dr. Kerrl lay comparatively low during the summer, examining the position and making up his mind: noting, too, without a doubt, the heart-searchings going on in Lutheran circles. The Lutherans, as he well knew, had a strong tradition of loyalty to the State; and there were many pastors, weary of the long, exhausting struggle, who had begun to wonder whether it might not be better to reach some sort of compromise with the State.

The new Reichs Minister broke his long silence in September. He put forward a suggestion, and he promulgated a law.

The suggestion was for the appointment of Committees which were themselves to work out an

effective solution to the whole problem. The Church was to attempt to clear up something which in the eyes of the State was its own mess. It had complained of interference—very well, said Dr. Kerrl, he would give it a chance to work unhindered. More than that, it would have the chance to succeed where the State itself had failed. In one generous gesture he offered it the opportunity to regain world prestige. At the head of the Committee would be no Müller, but a churchman, one of themselves, so that they could never again complain that they had been imposed on by the State.

That was the suggestion. The law—"for safeguarding the German Evangelical Church"—contained the paragraph: "The Reichs Minister for Church Affairs is empowered, for the restoration of orderly conditions in the German Evangelical Church and the Regional Evangelical Churches, to issue ordinances with binding legal force. The ordinances will be promulgated in the Reich Law Gazette."

It was a curious move. With one hand he offered the Evangelical Church that long-sought after freedom to settle its own problem: with the other he assumed an authoritarian control more despotic than anything that Müller, even in his hey-day, had ever dreamt of.

In October Dr. Zoellner was appointed head of the main Committee. True to Dr. Kerrl's promise

he was not a Party man. Far from being a State puppet, he was an acknowledged churchman, a well-known figure in the Confessional Front. Once again it looked as if something constructive was going to be done.

The Lutherans in particular and the Protestant Church in general hailed the Committees with a degree of cautious relief. The Lutherans even went so far as to offer to accept all Dr. Kerri's ordinances under certain conditions, such as the dismissal of the Bishops created by Müller. A few of the more sceptical members of the Confessional Front alone—those belonging to "intact" churches in the south—looked the gift horse sternly in the mouth and shook their heads: a gesture which events were to prove justified. For the most part, the Evangelical Church, justifiably anxious to reach a solution and eagerly prepared to give the new Reichs Minister the benefit of the doubt, swallowed the State bait.

Within a few weeks the leaders of the Confessional Front, however, were forced to realize that the men on the Committees had been put to work for a State that denied even their own premises. By December it was clear that the Committees were doomed to failure. The conviction was openly expressed: and the State retaliated by confiscating Evangelical Trustee Funds. Dr. Kerri forbade church authorities, in areas still being looked after by Committees, to levy collections for

administrative purposes, to organize synods, to distribute multigraphed declarations or to examine and ordain theological students.

It was a case of returning to the stalemate of 1934.

A Confessional Synod for the whole Reich met on February 17, 1936, and decided that the Committees could not be accepted as either a temporary or permanent government of the Church. This decision, clear enough in itself, widened the cleavage in the Provisional Church Government, for the Lutherans still clung closely to their belief that the State was making an honest attempt to solve the Evangelical problem. So deep were these differences inside the Protestant Church that a new executive committee of the Provisional Church Government had to be formed.

Then, as suddenly as the Encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* in the Catholic struggle, came a stroke of drama in Protestant Germany's fight against submission to the Reich.

At Whitsuntide, 1936, the Confessional Leaders sent Hitler himself a secret memorandum which asked, in effect: "Do you, or do you not, want to de-Christianize the Church?"

The Memorandum made it plain that promises had not been kept. Was this with the connivance of the Party, or in spite of it? Why was the Church never allowed to answer publicly accusations made against it? How far did the National-Socialist

Weltanschauung impinge upon the Christianity of the Gospels? Justice, Concentration Camps, the creed of Blood and Soil, the activities of the Gestapo—all the vexed questions of the past years were raised and clearly put. In this document the Evangelical Church gave the Führer a clear-cut opportunity to define once and for all, if he could, his attitude towards organized Christianity.

There was no answer.

To this day nobody knows for certain whether it ever reached his hands. Certainly no acknowledgment of it, from any source whatever, was received by the leaders of the Confessional Front.

But in July, this secret document, addressed confidentially to the Führer himself, was published simultaneously throughout the entire German press. The war against the Confessional Front increased rather than diminished.

That was the only answer Protestantism ever received to the questions it had asked.

By January 1937 the Committees had broken down altogether. Once again, the war was on. A theological college attached to the Confessional Front was closed down, and theological students all over Germany were warned by Minister Rust that any student who so much as attended a Confessional lecture would be expelled from his University.

Dr. Zoellner and the whole Reichs Church

Committee formally resigned on February 12. In the meantime secret police had entered and searched Dr. Zoellner's house, confiscating a number of declarations despite the fact that he had been promised freedom of communication with the laity.

On February 13 Kerrl made a speech in which he said: "Bishop von Galen (a Catholic) and Dr. Zoellner wanted to bring home to me what Christianity really is, namely, that it is a question of the acknowledgement of Jesus as the Son of God. This is ridiculous, quite unessential. The Apostle's Creed is no longer the statement of Christianity. There has now arisen a new authority concerning what Christ and Christianity really is. This new authority is Adolf Hitler."<sup>1</sup>

This statement at least defined Reichsminister Kerrl's position in respect to the re-organization of the Evangelical Church, and explained the kind of difficulty the Committees working under him came up against. Even Lutherans had to agree that here was no basis for a Church peace. The members of the various Committees returned to their homes; and the third attempt to unite the Evangelical Church with the Third Reich had to be written off a failure.

During April, May and June arrest followed arrest. The Gestapo broke into houses, stole documents, impounded pastors. By the end of October it is

<sup>1</sup> *The Struggle for Religious Freedom in Germany*, pp. 139-140.

estimated (exact figures are hard to find) that 500 pastors had been arrested—that is to say, since the time the Führer had promised that the elections were to take place “in complete liberty and along the lines determined by the Congregations themselves.”

During July the Church received a further blow when the Finance Department of the Reich took over the monies of the Protestant Churches and assumed complete control of it. Collections for organization from within were forbidden by the State.

On the first of July Niemoller, defiant leader of the Confessional Front, had been arrested.

In his last sermon, given on June 27, 1937, this pastor had said:

“We have no more thought of using our own powers to escape the arm of the authorities than had the Apostles of old. No more are we ready to keep silent at man’s behest, when God commands us to speak. For it is, and must remain the case, that we must obey God rather than man. . . .

“In this time of very special trial and struggle, we must bear in mind that every attempt to gain security by some other means, every turning of our eyes after some other source of strength, and support, works exactly in the opposite way to that which we intend. . . . The suffering of our community, the shame which we have to bear when we take our

stand beside the Crucified One, that is indeed a heavy burden and hardship; we feel the weight of it, and doubt creeps into our soul. . . . But Jesus says: "Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you and persecute you. . . ."

"There is indeed no hope except to hold firm to the Crucified One and learn to say in simple and therefore certain faith: 'In the bottom of my heart Thy name and Cross alone shine forth at all times and in all hours, and therefore I can be glad.' It may be a long road until we are truly glad, like those who, like the Apostles, were counted worthy to suffer shame for Jesus' name. . . ."

Although arrested and flung into gaol on July 1, 1937, Niemoller was not brought to trial until February 1938—by which time he had had over six months' imprisonment under a regime where imprisonment is hard. The trial was heard in camera. On March 2 the Court passed sentence.

For "abuse of the pulpit," Niemoller was sentenced to seven months' imprisonment, but he was acquitted of "underhand attacks on State and Party" and his eight months in gaol were taken to account for the seven to which he was sentenced. He was thus a free man. He was fined 2,000 Marks on offences against the Emergency Decree of February 28, 1933: but the sentence, taken all in all, amounted to an acquittal. Tried by judges who had learnt their law before the coming of National-



Socialism, he was to leave the court a free man, without any imputation of any kind against his honesty, his integrity or his love of country.

As Pastor Niemoller stepped down from the dock three members of the Gestapo who had been waiting for the conclusion of the case stepped forward and re-arrested him. Niemoller was a free man: the law had set him free. But the Gestapo in Germany are not answerable to any higher justice. They are themselves supreme justice. As this free man stepped from the dock, they marched forward and led him away to the Concentration Camp, where so far as is known, he still lives to-day.

Before this example of National-Socialist justice, the whole world stood appalled.

. . . . .

In Germany now there is a lull. The Confessional Front, without its greatest leader, is not the force it was. The State, for its part, is working with very much less severity. Dr. Kerrl, after his early indiscretions, is making genuine efforts to bring about a gradual union without resort to barbarity.

Between the *Reichsminister* and the Evangelical leaders this uneasy compromise may lead to union, or to more disturbance. At the moment, it is impossible to say. Each now recognizes the depth of the differences between their respective conceptions of Christianity. It is only fair to add that Dr. Kerrl is doing what he can at a task obviously

insoluble without complete submission on one side or the other.

Against neither Protestantism nor Catholicism is there any serious persecution at present in the Alt Reich. But both realize that at any moment the struggle may have to be renewed. Both are prepared to defend again the same fundamental principles, the same Cross.

In their respective struggles with the State, Catholicism and Protestantism never once appealed for each other's help. They each fought their own battle. But each realized, more than they had done for centuries, the good qualities of the other: they have been brought nearer together than they have ever been before.

In a sense they have met with the same success, suffered a similar failure. Among the adult congregations of both great faiths, there is a spirit stronger now than before the persecution. National-Socialism has probably increased the number of practising Christians. But equally, both Protestantism and Catholicism have lost their youth to the Party: and the ultimate consequences of that may well be enormous.

There are, too, the unknown people of these two Faiths: men and women, boys and girls facing the world, young priests and young parsons, who, Catholic and Protestant, have made the same material sacrifices, endured the same insults—whose

sufferings will never be known, whose courage will never be sung, whose searchings of heart and unhappiness during those years no-one else can realize.

To the eternal credit of the great Protestant churches there have been millions of people in Germany who, "counted worthy to suffer shame for Jesus' sake," have not hesitated to carry that tremendous Cross.

All over the world true Christians will hope that the present peace in Germany, the cessation of hostilities in the Alt Reich, will not descend again to the levels it knew before: and that the Evangelical Church will never bend the knee to any State that scorns the Bible and flings the Crucifix aside.

Against such attacks Protestantism must, and will, remain united.

### XIII

#### THE NATIONAL-SOCIALIST'S REPLY

THE National-Socialist State claims that at no time did it wish to interfere with the spiritual organization of the Evangelical Church. Only after two years of bitter quarrelling among the Protestant denominations themselves—working for disunity within the Reich—was a Reichsminister appointed to bring about some degree of order in Confessional circles. Even then, the Minister was expected to deal only with the temporal unity of the Church: he was neither ordered nor expected to attack Evangelical dogma. The period during which the unhappy Müller was active as *Reichsbischof* is not stressed by the Party authorities. They call 1933-1935 “two years of failure on the part of the Churches.”

But even under Kerl, it is admitted, no progress was made. This was due to the stubborn opposition of the *Bekenntniskirche*, or Confessional Front, who made no attempt whatever even to meet the State half-way in its reasonable demands for a united Protestantism. Therefore another two years later the Führer himself, on February 15, 1937, issued the following proclamation:

“Since the *Kirschenausschuss* (the Committee) has not found it possible to harmonize the various

parties in the German Evangelical Church, the Church shall now, acting in complete freedom and according to the votes of the Church population, work out for itself a new constitution and new rules of order. I therefore empower the Reichsminister for Church Affairs to prepare for an election of a General Synod to this end, and to take adequate measures therefore."

Does that, ask the Party, sound like despotism? Is that the action of a man anxious to persecute the Church? During all the period involved, churches, both Protestant and Catholic, have actually increased. Would this be allowed by a State determined to root out organized Christianity?

At Party Headquarters in Munich the inquirer is handed a remarkable document, undated, signed by the "Rev. Dr. O. Stewart Michael, late Pastor of the American Churches in Dresden and München." Certain extracts from this leaflet are worth reproduction. Although the style may seem peculiar, his sentiments are presumably endorsed by the officials as giving a fair view of the National-Socialist attitude. It is written in English.

"The German Government in its dangerous situation among the nations, into which it was damned by the iniquitous Versailles document, is earnestly striving for internal unity, ecclesiastically as well as otherwise. Surely some form of unification for the body, whose Lord and Master prayed

that 'all might be one,' is not a diabolical aim. . . . Church history has certainly not been lacking in efforts to secure brotherly unity. Almost every age has witnessed various movements to harmonize Christians, and especially Anglo-Saxon countries. Why not in the Third Reich?

"For years now the Third Reich has been earnestly seeking to develop order and some form of unity in German Christendom. . . . The Hitler regime in its efforts has not sought recourse to any means that might savour of autocracy or tyranny. Each move it has made for Church unity has been left to existing Church representatives, and these have of their own initiative and impulses tried to carry through the benign object of their desires and prayers. It is well known, however, that this view is met with flippant disbelief and militant derision in certain quarters, where a meretricious and prejudiced propaganda, generally subsidized with much money, has been active. . . ."

After referring to the Constitution drawn up by the Committee and Müller in 1933, it says of Dr. Jaeger's activities: "Then came the effort under Dr. Jaeger to reinforce episcopal command and to add something concrete and practically effective. The Bishops, backed by Jaeger's insistence, began to make their constitutional power felt by certain defiant clergy. The results of this more arbitrary rule, however, were not agreeable to the State, which

deeply deprecated the necessarily following punitive measures.

"It was then, some two years after the new arrangement had been put into operation, that the state first took part *officially* in the move to infuse order in the Evangelical Church polity, which instead of being benignly benefited began to show manifest signs of enhanced combative discord. . . .

"One stumbling block in the path of unified progress . . . was State episcopacy, though there were other sources of discontent active. . . . There was something phantasmic about the name and the idea that after a bit of reflection, unexpected by the Church leaders, brought back to German minds darksome memories of a deeply dreaded past. . . . Hierarchical episcopacy had in past centuries deluged poor suffering Germany in blood. Hence a number of leading Churchmen began to rebel openly against episcopal authority. Naturally some of them felt themselves martyred in a good cause, when corrective measures were applied and they had to suffer for their renitence. . . .

"The Reich government had really but little to do with the punitive measures employed by some of the constitutionally appointed overseers of the church affairs. The sometimes violent protests against the 'martyrdom' of a few emotional German clerics are plainly the result of banefully false or scant information, or else the noxious fruit of

deliberate and malevolent purpose to misrepresent and harm the Hitler regime. . . .

"The Hitler regime never dreamed of instituting a Middle Age episcopacy. It never wanted to interfere in the *spiritual* affairs of the Church. It simply craved some measure of uniformity in the *temporalities*. It has long been responsible for the financial soundness of the Church organization. It has ensured a living for the clergy, no matter what private opinions, theological or otherwise, the clergy may have professed. It therefore had the right to demand order in these temporalities. Furthermore the State had the right, in the highest and most fundamental sense of that term, to demand that among the nation's spiritual leaders there should be no baneful opposition to its benign purposes; that loyalty sincere and active be shown its ensign and its standards. . . .

"There were of course other 'stones of stumbling' in the path of that movement besides State Episcopacy. Among them must be mentioned *dogma* and *secular politics*, both of which were quite natural to the situation and both of which were about as obstruent and obstreporous. . . .

"Under the cloak of religious dissent it is easily possible to foster disloyalty. At the close of the first two years of the agitation for ecclesiastical harmony, the State found it absolutely necessary to take hold itself officially. A regular Cabinet Portfolio for the



regulation of Church Affairs . . . and a Standing Committee for the Reich (*Reichskirchenausschuss*) was put into action. . . .”

The failure of the Committees is attributed to the Confessional Front. “As its name indicates,” says the Rev. Dr. Michael, “Confessionalism has laid stress mainly on doctrinal distinctions, on what we may fairly call *Catechetical casuistry*. It is of little use nor is it possible even to outline what this means, for it will be generally understood. *Reactionary fundamentalism* would perhaps fairly define its platform. . . .”

Perhaps this document does not fairly define the platform of National-Socialism. It has however a reflected importance in that it is seriously handed out to the inquirer at Munich by the Party Propaganda officials.

. . . . .

Rosenberg, interviewed by a Swede, Dr. Kinsky, of *Ord och Bild*, summed up the Protestant struggle in these words:

“After the revolution the Protestant Church collapsed while the Catholics remained inimical to the new movement. Denominational Christianity had reached its spiritual low water mark. This disruption went so far that . . . it became necessary for the State to intervene, not in the capacity of an arbiter in the contest, but with a view to re-establishing order, and to prevent further dis-

ruption. In accordance with the principle laid down by Adolf Hitler in *Mein Kampf* . . . both the Party and the State kept themselves strictly outside all doctrinal and ecclesiastical controversy. It was impossible for them, however, to stand aside while people were viciously quarrelling with each other over ecclesiastical matters, and . . . mutual hate was celebrating orgies such as were scarcely to be believed.

“The purpose of the Church Committees, who were composed of moderate elements, was to bring together again the two parties which had drifted so far apart from one another. This effort failed, and the present condition of affairs came about which can be summarized as follows: As before, the State leaves the Protestant Church to settle its own dogmas. It makes itself responsible however for its material well-being by paying the stipends of the clergy and maintaining external order, and it will continue to do this until such time as the Protestant Church is in a position . . . to take its own fate into its own hand. . . .”

. . . . .

The average intelligent National-Socialist with whom you discuss the matter in Germany to-day puts his case roughly as follows:

“You have no idea of the extent to which Protestantism was sub-divided, even territorially as well as dogmatically, in 1933.

“ Now you know quite well that one of the basic qualities of National-Socialism is the unity of the German people. Two-thirds of the Reich was nominally Protestant at that time: therefore two-thirds of the Reich were lacking in that unity which Adolf Hitler required of the State. For a long time he allowed them to try and settle their problems for themselves. It was only when they failed so dismally that he stepped in officially. There was no hint of persecution or autocracy about the manner in which he joined in the debate. He wanted to unify Protestantism, not to destroy it.

“ Yes, of course it is true that pastors went to gaol. Lots of them. But that was because they preached against the State. Just the same thing would happen in any other country to clergy who said the sort of things they said about the Government. They were paid to be Protestant pastors, not political agitators.

“ Take Niemoller, the man they’ve made a martyr of. Niemoller was a hopeless fellow. Brave, of course, but hopeless because he wouldn’t reason. He wasn’t even *prepared* to negotiate. The miracle was that he was allowed to go on for so long saying the things he did. He just attacked and attacked, Sunday after Sunday.

“ Listen! If there had been a real persecution, if the Führer had *really* made up his mind to fight the Church, then you *would* have had something to

write home about. The Churches would have been closed, and the clergymen expelled—and that would have been that. Instead the churches are packed and the clergymen are paid! Is that persecution?

“ I tell you, the Führer has *built* churches, hundreds of them. He has never closed a single one, and as he said in his speech he has never interfered with the form of a single service. If you call that persecution you must be mad.

“ Before the Party got power, Catholics and Protestants were at loggerheads, just as Protestants are always at loggerheads among themselves. This was in defiance of the united Germany that Adolf Hitler was building up. He appealed to the Churches for unity—signed a Concordat with Rome and asked the Evangelical Faith to stop squabbling. Wasn't it logical for us to try and get the Churches at least in temporal matters into a single fold? If you don't understand that, you don't understand modern Germany.

“ The Führer has no wish to interfere with the clergy of any denomination so long as they stick to the job for which he pays them—i.e. the spiritual guidance of their congregations. But the moment they trespass on the Führer's preserves—the politics of the Reich—they must expect to get bitten. Hard. That is logical.

“ The essence of National-Socialism is the

subordination of everything to the State. Loyalty and honour must come first. On loyalty and honour we have built a new Germany. If the Churches prefer another master, a struggle is inevitable.

“But of actual persecution there has been no sign. Anybody who says so is just spreading lies to discredit the Reich. Such tales are vicious gossip mostly invented by Jewish newspapers abroad. It is a pity such people cannot visit Germany and see for themselves that the Churches are fuller than ever. Then they would realize that there has been no persecution.”

•

PART III

CATHOLIC AUSTRIA

•



## XIV

### AUSTRIA SURRENDERS

It was a grey November day, raw, with low-lying clouds. The death in Paris of a young German diplomat, von Rath, had been announced. He had died of wounds received at the hands of a young Jew. This young Jew, half demented by the plight of his parents under the regime, had imagined that in one crazy moment he could avenge their misery. Vienna, on that grey unhappy day, read the news, and shuddered.

In the afternoon we stood outside the Leopoldstadt police station, an Austrian friend and I. We had passed down the Taborstrasse, where they were making public bonfires in the street of all the Jewish literature they could lay their hands on. The shops were being looted, and young men and girls were trying on the clothes they had stolen. We passed down the side streets where they were using small hand grenades, destroying Jewish property. By this time, according to official figures given later in the *Beobachter*, twenty-three synagogues in the Leopoldstadt, Vienna's Jewish quarter, were burning simultaneously. We watched the fire brigades playing their hoses on adjacent property, not on the synagogues themselves.



In front of the police station, when we arrived there, we saw a young policeman take off his steel helmet and smash it hard into the face of the old Jew who had answered him back. The policeman went on, blow after blow, until the old man sank slowly, without a groan, to the pavement. They dragged him in by the heels.

Jews who had been ordered to report were arriving singly, shuffling in terror, holding their hats down on their heads, trying to avoid the hooligans who were lying in wait for them. Near us an old man lay in the gutter, being kicked by boys and girls of seventeen. Over the road a girl who tried to protect her father was flung face downward in the muddy street. She rose again, and was flung again on to the pavement edge. Her eyes stared white out of a face no longer recognizable. From the windows of the police station the police not on duty leant out, grinning, to see such fun. Another bearded figure, round-shouldered, had his face beaten in until he fell, with a small thump, on the station steps. The crowd laughed as his unconscious body was dragged along the pavement to the open door.

My Austrian friend, a Catholic, turned to me and said: "It will be our turn next."

. . . . .

In one sense that friend was wrong.

In the case of Austria even more than that of the

Alt Reich it is important to distinguish between the State attack upon Jewry, and the struggle with the Church. In the Alt Reich there was never at any point a persecution of either Catholics or Protestants comparable to the persecution of the Jews. Sympathizers who blindly imagine that this has been a common struggle make a mistake. Jewry and organized Christianity have from the start been regarded by National-Socialism as quite different problems. As such they have been approached from a different angle, and dealt with in a different way. The Churches have not suffered the agony of Jewry.

The distinction in Austria is important mainly because here, more than in the Alt Reich, there was meted out to the Church treatment almost as savage as the Jews had suffered in parts of Germany. This applies mainly to the early weeks of the occupation, when priests were subjected to the vilest abuse, as well as physical assault, in certain districts of Vienna. Nor, for instance, can the Church struggle in Germany show such scenes as the old Stephanskirche gazed down on when they smashed the windows of the Archbishop's Palace, and flung a priest head-long through a window to the square below. The struggle in Austria has taken a different form to that in Germany proper. It has been harsher, more brutal. It has made no show of constitutionalism. It has ridden rough-shod over the decencies. And

yet, even so, it has been milder than the persecution of the Jews.

When the troops of the Reich marched into the Ostmark, they conquered a country over 90 per cent. Catholic, with a Catholic tradition particularly strong among the peasants, ruled by a Catholic Government.

Austria, mutilated by the peace, had been attempting to build up in recent years the first genuine Catholic State to be founded on, and inspired by, the Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*. Monsignor Seipel had worked night and day for the establishment of a State on lines that were Christian first, and everything else second. God's law was to come before that of the economists: Christian teaching was to have preference over political theory.

On the death of Monsignor Seipel (one of Austria's greatest figures) an even greater took over the leadership of the Christian-Socialist Party—Engelbert Dollfuss. In September 1933 he had inaugurated his German Corporative Christian State. To Vienna, cradle and home of civilization in the west, he had called all German Catholics for a common profession of their Faith. He had studied National-Socialism, and as a solution to Austria's troubles he had rejected it. He had found himself with the responsibility of creating alone that really Catholic State in which he so passionately believed.

Three weeks before his death, Dollfuss said: "We intend that this German land of the Alps and the Danube shall once again be a country which will prove to mankind that under a new form of government, and with a new social order inspired by the Christian ideal, a people can be happy and contented."

As early as April 1933 he had said: "It is a question of finding a suitable form of Government, so that our constitution will embody the conception of the corporative organization, which for centuries was the foundation of our political life, and is required by the Holy Father in the Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*. I think that we Catholics in Austria may be proud if during this Holy Year we succeed in reducing to practise the prescriptions of the Holy Father for the reconstitution of the social order."

The Constitution was authoritarian with democratic principles woven into it. There was complete religious freedom in Austria, but the Government itself was so openly and fundamentally Catholic that the charge of clericalism was inevitably raised in connection with the regime. To this charge Dollfuss replied on March 4, 1934: "The construction of our State according to a Christian Catholic spirit has nothing in common with clericalism. Our Bishops have proved this by the decision which to us too is a hard one, that priests are to be

withdrawn from political life. . . . The Church has not only wished to show thereby that it has no wish to achieve a secular or political domination, but that its only aim is that the doctrine of Christ should be more effectively preached among the people, unhampered by false prejudices."

In July 1934 this small magnificent man died for Austria and the Faith, the blood flowing unstaunched from the wounds inflicted by his assassins, his arms extended in the form of the Cross.

The story of his successor, Schuschnigg, is too well-known to bear repetition. Perhaps his defiant gesture to call a plebiscite was madness that precipitated events: certain it is that the Reich was aware that a genuine plebiscite would have gone against them. They had to work quickly.

On February 24, 1938, Schuschnigg announced that the plebiscite would be held. On February 26 the head of the Catholic Church in Austria, Cardinal Innitzer, spoke as follows:

"The Austrian Chancellor has brought joy to every true Austrian. In accordance with his words, we Austrians will strive with complete devotion for our beloved Fatherland, for our People, and for genuine Christian culture: as in fact we needs must do, if we follow our sacred duty. No-one shall surpass us in loyalty and labour. . . ."

Schuschnigg was called to Berchtesgaden. Rather than "spill the blood of a single German," he yielded

to the demands made of him. At the end of his last broadcast, his voice broke as he cried: "God save Austria." His ministers embraced him, all but Seyss-Inquart, who was busy telephoning Berlin.

On March 12, the German troops marched into Austria.

That night Cardinal Innitzer issued the following appeal:

" Catholics of the diocese of Vienna are requested on Sunday, March 13, to pray to God Our Lord, to thank Him for the bloodless progress of the great political transformation, and for a happy future for Austria." On the 15th, this Prince of the Church, spiritual head of the most Catholic country in Europe, the man who a month earlier had cried "No-one shall surpass us in loyalty and labour," saw Hitler at the Imperial Hotel, after which he announced to the faithful:

" Both priests and faithful will stand unconditionally behind the great German State and its Führer. The blessing of providence must certainly accompany the world historical struggle against the criminal madness of Bolshevism, and for the security of German life, for the strength and honour of the Reich and the unity of the German people. I urge the leaders of the young people's organizations to prepare to join those of the German Reich."

Three days later still, when some of the Austrian Bishops wrote a public letter declaring their loyalty

to Hitler—that letter which started with the phrase “We joyfully recognize the distinguished achievements of the National-Socialist movement”—Cardinal Innitzer wrote to Bürckel a further letter in which he added, in his own hand, “Heil Hitler!”

A cat may not look at a Cardinal. But during those days I was in Vienna and I am reporting only what I know: that I was among Catholics who wept, who found themselves in a world they no longer understood, a world that had turned turtle in a fortnight and flung the Faith into confusion. Their tears and their misery were in part for the Austria they had always loved; but in a large measure they were caused by the incomprehensible surrender of their spiritual head—the man who had declared with pride “No-one shall surpass us in loyalty and labour.”

Where now was the spirit of the little man who had not been afraid to die for the Faith in Austria, his arms outstretched in the form of the Cross?

. . . . .

It is not enough to say—although it is true—that Cardinal Innitzer is no Viennese, but a man from the Sudetenland. There are certain aspects of clerical life in Austria which, however unpalatable, have got to be faced up to and admitted if we are to consider objectively the agony that Austria was to go through.

In the first place the clergy were weak because they had too much power. It is an odd thing that

though Austria was 90 per cent. Catholic, the Church, by the terms of the Austrian Concordat of June 1933 was not designated as the State Church. It was simply given full freedom of administration and jurisdiction in its own sphere. It enjoyed no such direct privileges as does, for example, the State Church in England.

It did not require them.

The great monasteries owned vast areas of land, on which lived peasants who paid their rents and dues direct to the Church. The Church had become—and indeed still is—immensely wealthy. In the villages the priest as a man of learning was the man in possession. Questions of all kinds were deferred to him. He wielded a considerable power outside his spiritual domain. He was often an autocrat.

It would be ludicrous to pretend that he was always a model to the Faith he served. Among large, poor families it had for generations been a temptation to “push” one of the younger boys into the Church, where he would be not only a credit to the family socially, but also be assured of good food and board. For a long time there had been in Austria a proportion of priests without a genuine vocation for the priesthood.

There had also been at one time considerable immorality among both the monastic and secular clergy. More than once the Vatican, both before



and after the war, had had to take strong disciplinary measures against a laxity that threatened to be a scandal in all Austria. This state of affairs, in recent years, had been steadily improving: it is probable that it would have been rectified. But it is idle to deny that it had not existed. Jesuits and Dominicans alone remained above suspicion.

In the average Austrian village the priest's life was not a struggle. He had nothing to fight against other than his own inclinations. His entire flock—so sincerely and earnestly religious was the average peasant—attended Mass regularly, and believed in the Church implicitly. There was no sign of an attack upon the Church from any quarter. It was inevitable that he became slack in certain parishes, and ran to seed. He had nothing to contend with. A sort of easy-going *Gemütlichkeit* is one of the greatest charms of the Austrian, and always has been: but among the clergy this reached proportions that mere charm alone could never justify.

These facts are admitted by the clergy themselves in Austria to-day. They are nowhere denied. And they must be realized if we are to see in perspective the developments of the past eighteen months.

I was in Vienna the week-end after the German troops arrived. To many Catholic Austrians who, in a torment of the spirit, went to their Confessors for advice, the priests were saying: "This invasion is the will of God. As the Cardinal says, our loyalty

must go out to the Führer in what he is doing. We must obey his will."

For five years, remember, National-Socialism had undermined Catholicism in the Alt Reich and had throttled its education. Seven thousand priests and pastors had been flung into prison for defending Christianity against the "Christianity that was not of Christ." All Catholic and Protestant Youth had been enrolled under a new banner alien to the old. The Catholic press had been suppressed. The Holy Father himself had categorically condemned the State that flung aside the Crucifix.

Yet—when the Catholic Austrian went to his confessor, eager to defend the Faith, prepared if need be to die for it, he was told to welcome and acknowledge in his own country this force which had for five years treated with contempt the very basis of Christianity.

Little groups of Catholics, in those days, went at some risk to the tomb where Dollfuss lay: and they stood before it, praying that some particle of his spirit might return to the land for which he had lived so fully and for which he had died with honour.

No newspaper printed, or ever will, the personal agony endured by the best type of Catholic in Vienna in the spring of 1938: torn between loyalty to the Church, and what seemed to him like the weakness and even treachery of its leaders.

## XV

### THE RAPE OF THE SCHOOLS

DURING the summer of 1938 I was back again in Austria, not in Vienna this time but in the hills, away from the incessant roar of the heavy bombers quartered at the airport Aspern, away from the unending political broadcasts, the sound of S.A. and S.S. parading through the streets, away from the town where the suicide roll grew daily larger and already the first small urns of human ash were being delivered from Dachau to houses in mourning.

Here there arrived by post a letter from State headquarters to the family who owned the chalet in the hills. It notified them, in abrupt official language, that the school to which their one boy went—a famous establishment run for generations by the Jesuits, where many of Austria's greatest figures had been taught—was to become a police college. It was to cease being a school. Enclosed was a list of the alternative State schools to which he might be sent. As term began in a fortnight, parents were requested to choose at once the particular State school they preferred, and inform the authorities.

That was all.

In Austria there was no nonsense about a vote.

There was no show of constitutionalism. Why should there be? Had not the Catholic leader, Cardinal Innitzer, handed the Austrian Youth to Hitler on a silver ecclesiastical salver three days after the arrival of the German troops? The authorities can scarcely be blamed for making short work of Catholic education when they had this declaration behind them. In Austria they were able to accomplish in little more than six months something that had taken years in the Alt Reich.

We visited the schools in question. Already the necessary changes were being made for the arrival of the police. A few of the older Jesuits were to be allowed to remain, walled off in quarters of their own: the remainder had fourteen days in which to shift for themselves.

. . . . .

Up to last summer there belonged to Catholic teaching and education in Austria 1,375 educational establishments comprising altogether 2,298 separate undertakings. (For instance there would be a Kindergarten and an elementary school in the same block of buildings.)

These undertakings consisted of 619 Elementary and High Schools, with roughly 2,000 teachers and 40,000 pupils; 59 Middle Schools with 710 teachers and 7,856 pupils: 14 Women's and 6 Men's Teachers Colleges (there were only five non-Catholic colleges of this kind in the country), 414 Women's Profes-

sional Colleges, and 438 Kindergartens and Children's Care establishments with another 40,000 children.

In addition, Austria had 569 Catholic boarding schools, and 136 Seminaries for the teaching of religious students. These various establishments altogether gave work to 8,000 people directly employed in teaching.

All participation in educational matters has now been taken from these teachers unless they take the oath to the Führer and teach on National-Socialist lines. In the sense of sustained, free Catholic teaching, the Church has lost every one of those schools.

All that remains of Catholic education is two hours a week in the State schools, for the most part given by teachers trained in the Party ideology. Only those priests can still give instruction who have promised on oath to mention nothing that could be said to contradict the National-Socialist *Weltanschauung*.

In the schools there was initiated a system of propaganda designed to increase apostasy in Austria. Sheets were put on the desks of the children which the parents had only to sign to relieve their children of any further religious instruction whatever. This propaganda became particularly strong after October 7, 1938, when new sheets were sent direct to parents headed "THERE IS STILL TIME!" Previous sheets had been headed: "Have you Already Left

the Religious Brotherhood? Yes? No?" Behind all this propaganda, a good deal of which I was allowed to examine myself, lay the threat that in future religious instruction would be charged extra. It was even hinted, without the slightest cause, that baptism might cost RM. 50—an impossible figure for a poor family. Anybody who doubts the ferocious tone of these pamphlets should obtain one signed by a *Gauverbandsleiter* Ehrentrant—the pamphlet is one of the "*Nachrichten der Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Gauverbände der Elternrunden der Ostmark*"—dealing with the Jesuits. It sinks to a level that mercifully defeated its purpose. The general effect of the propaganda however, particularly on poor people, was considerable. As in Bavaria it was made quite plain that open profession of the Faith would be no help to the boy in obtaining lucrative employment when he left school and had to find work.

Speaking privately to the *Reichskulturkammer* last autumn, Herr Rosenberg made the following points which are important from the point of view of modern teaching in Austria:

"In replying to various questions relating to our attitude towards the Churches, I would like to emphasize that my replies are in harmony with the Führer's opinions on this very complicated subject.

"There are hot-heads among us who would like to compel the Führer simply to root out the Catholic

and the Protestant Confessional Churches, just as we have the Bolshevist party. But . . . we must remember that the international position of the Catholic Church calls for very careful tactics on our part towards that Church.

“That the Catholic Church and also the Confessional Church, in their present form, must disappear from the life of our people, is my full conviction, and I believe I am entitled to say that this is also our Führer’s viewpoint. . . . Whatever still functions of the Catholic Youth movement is already nothing more than various fractional groups which will be absorbed in course of time. The Hitler Youth Organization is an absorbent sponge which nothing can resist.

“Furthermore the development of our teaching scheme in schools of all categories is of such an anti-Jewish Christian type that the growing generation will be forewarned against the blackcoat swindle. And you should also remember that even in the Catholic Church there are sincere Germans working as priests, who are utterly devoted to the National-Socialist philosophy. With their help we shall occupy the last, and I admit extremely solid, positions of the Church.”<sup>1</sup>

A little earlier there had been secretly issued “Terms of Reference” (*Richtlinien*) for the teaching of Hitler-Jugend in Austria. They are so astonishing

<sup>1</sup> *Kulturkampf*, September 20, 1938.

that one is tempted to doubt their validity: but during various visits to the Continent I have been able from four separate sources to confirm their existence. The *Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican newspaper, went to some pains to verify their existence independently, and was satisfied that they are perfectly genuine. They represent the lines along which members of the H-J should regard the Church. I give only a selection of the fifty that were distributed to teachers in typescript:

“ Christianity is a religion for slaves and fools, for the ‘ last shall be first and the first shall be last ! ’ ”  
Also “ ‘ Blessed are the poor in spirit ’ . ”

“ Christianity regards the German and the negro as equals.”

“ The New Testament is a Jewish swindle on the part of the four Evangelists, because the teaching is copied exactly from the Indian belief in Jischnu Christa.”

“ Before Christianity began German culture was already on a high plane, though later destroyed by Christianity.”

“ The Bible is a continuation of the Talmud, an entirely Jewish work, especially the Old Testament.”

“ There is no Christian culture.”

“ Christianity is always unwanted and has to squeeze its way in.”

“ Christianity corrupted the Germans because it has brought to the German mind such things as



adultery, theft, etc., which they never thought about before."

"Proof that Christ was no God, e.g. 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?'"

"How died Christ? Whining at the Cross! How died Planetta? Crying 'Heil Hitler! All for Germany!'"

(Planetta was one of the murderers of Dollfuss.)

"The Ten Commandments represent the lowest instincts of mankind."

"Holiness is ludicrous. The Saints never accomplished anything. When one of them lived in mud and filth, just like a pig, everyone called him holy."

"The 'Virgin' Mary and her 'Immaculate' conception!"

"The Papacy is a swindle. After Peter there was no Pope for 150 years. Popes were always the worst possible people—e.g. Alexander VI."

"Christianity is merely a cloak for Judaism."

"The Catholic Church opposes the national efforts of the German people."

"Nowadays we build no more churches and no longer do people enter them. (Visible decline of church.) Nowadays we build stadiums (e.g. Berlin, Nürnberg, etc.)."

"The new eternal city is Nürnberg. Rome is finished."

That should be enough as a selection. More than one not quoted is actually disgusting.

It is important to realize that these are not the typical sentiments of a State school in modern Austria: they are for *Hitler-Jugend* only, during periods when they are actually away from school. But they are significant in so far as they represent the lines on which the future cream of the Party is being taught to think.

While most of the elementary and middle schools in Austria became State schools simply by a change of staff, famous monastic establishments such as Stella Matutina and Karksburg, where all the teaching was done by the priests, have been closed down altogether as schools and taken over for State purposes. That the Stella Matutina near Feldkirch should now be a Reich School for Finance, and Karksburg a Police College, are nevertheless perfectly logical developments of the situation. Catholics who blindly condemn the taking over of the great monastic colleges forget two important factors: firstly, that it was quite reasonable to expect a State accustomed to another form of teaching to adapt this system at once to Austria; and secondly, that in those colleges taken over either by the Army or the Police, a fair rent is now being paid for the use of the buildings. What *was* intolerable was the way in which the majority of Jesuits in these institutions were given no more than a fortnight in which to shift for themselves, and in general the appalling

position in which teachers of Catholic doctrine all over Austria found themselves. A pistol was held to their heads: either to teach the new ideology, or to lose their jobs.

What has been the fate of the boys formerly at a monastic college abruptly transferred to a State school? Here is the testimony of one, whose evidence has been corroborated by others.

"The new teachers have made no direct attempt to steer us away from the Church. About half of the class I am in—there are about thirty of us—is Catholic. We get jeered at by the H-J, but so far the masters have done nothing against us, nor have they treated us differently because we were at a Jesuit school.

"But for instance one day when some of us got permission to go to early Mass before school, we found our breakfast stolen when we got back. The other boys roared with laughter and said surely we didn't want any breakfast after eating the Host. That sort of thing is fairly common. And of course the H-J sing songs against the Pope.

"When Bürckel made his speech the other night we were all made to go along and cheer as hard as we could, although he was pretty rude to Catholic people.

"The actual teaching is more thorough than we had with the Jesuits, even though their school had such a good name: that is to say, we are made to

work harder, to fit more hours of work into the day.

"Only two out of my class of thirty are going into the Army. Four or five who had made up their minds to become priests are now not going to do so."

There is no doubt that in a great number of schools the two hours per week promised by the regime are being given; but it is equally true that in those schools where religious instruction has lapsed for one reason or another—such as the failure of twenty pupils to ask for it specifically, or the dismissal of some teacher who did not conform to ideological teaching—all religious education has lapsed. The number of schools in this second class is increasing. Catholic teachers, after expulsion, are not being replaced. Even in those schools where such instruction does still take place, it is put at a disadvantage: either placed during the last hour of the day, or at a time when the rest are enjoying recreation.

At the same time religious instruction has been carried on in secret in Catholic families. It is sad to have to admit that priests have visited these houses disguised as workmen—because if they were to wear clerical clothes they might "disgrace" the houses they were visiting. Such, however, is the case. Not only priests, but former teachers are able in this fearful, furtive way to carry on among Austria's youth the teaching of the Faith.

The victory of National-Socialism in the matter of youth was far swifter, more complete, than in the

Alt Reich. To-day all the old Catholic schools are under State organization. An attempt is being made to bring up Austrian children in a great glow of blood and soil: German blood and German soil. How far this is being successful it is at the moment impossible to say. If the pendulum were to swing back now, there is no doubt that there would be a vast Catholic revival: but if the present Party remain in power a few years longer, a new generation will emerge in Austria that has not had the opportunity to learn anything but the treacherous weakness of religion, the perfidy of the priesthood, and the advantages that come of being a stout Party man before anything else.

Those eight thousand teachers who were previously responsible for Catholic education were powerless from the start. Not only was all Catholic information suppressed and the press strangled, but they themselves were given the choice of money or conviction. To their undying credit, thousands preferred to live in poverty: but their heroism could not prevent the victory of the State.

The Christian Corporative State of Monsignor Seipel and Dr. Dollfuss has long since been made a suburb of the Reich. The peasants, unshaken in their Faith, still flock to Mass; but the children spend their Sundays in the compulsory manœuvres of the *Hitler-Jugend*.

. . . . .

## XVI

### PERSECUTION

As Britain is well aware, the new regime in Austria has resulted in a flow of refugees from the country: not only of Jews, but of people who either because of a militant Catholicism or an ardent enthusiasm for Prince Otto are no longer wanted by Austria's new governors.

The general fate of Jews, Legitimists and the more militant Catholics in the days following the Anschluss is well-known. Thousands were swept away either to prison or a Concentration Camp, thousands committed suicide, thousands fled. Their fate was appalling. No-one with Christian feelings denies them a great measure of sympathy in their drawn-out anguish.

But there has been an inevitable sequel which sympathy alone must not be allowed to submerge: and that is that a vast crop of rumours and distortions began at that time, and have never ceased to circulate, concerning the actions of the Reich and the brutality of its representatives.

A great proportion of these rumours were, and are, entirely false.

An enormous amount of harrowing nonsense has been published about these matters which bears no

relation to the truth. It is a psychological fact that a man involved in a minor street accident is tempted to exaggerate it out of recognition by the time he has reached his home or his office. He soon sincerely believes that his own picture of what happened is a true mirror of events.

This is human nature. It applies to all the small things of life: and it applies with equal truth to the great. Terrible things happened in Vienna during those days: but they have been multiplied out of all proportion to the sober truth.

Further it is now a matter of common knowledge that there are *émigré* circles throughout Europe working for the downfall of the Reich at any cost. These circles do not scruple to spread stories about the regime which they make no attempt whatever to verify: so long as the stories are bad enough, then they are good enough. Thus in one way and another a vast amount of material has appeared in respectable British print which would not bear analysis or examination. This is all the more deplorable in that in the case of Austria there never was any need to exaggerate: the bare truth alone sufficiently illuminates that unhappy scene.

Here are one or two examples of the misrepresentation of which the Reich authorities have since legitimately complained.

Stories were circulated about the Benedictine monastery of Ettal, near Oberammergau (actually

in Bavaria, but it illustrates the point), which stated on "unimpeachable authority" that fifty of the monks had been arrested without any reason being given, had been flung into gaol, and the monastery compelled to pay RM.5 per day per head for their keep while there.

The truth, at that time, was that one monk had been arrested on the ground that he had lost his reason. As for payment, this touch has an element of truth about it because, certainly in Austria, all political prisoners have to be paid for—a custom which goes back to days long before National-Socialism was thought of.

In Vienna I went out of my way to visit a convent about which I had heard the most heart-rending tales. It had been taken over by soldiers, the story ran, who had occupied it with the utmost boorishness and ill manners, while the nuns themselves were living in terror from day to day, never knowing whether their next moment might not be their last.

Inside the convent, when I got there, a cheerful little nun showed me over the rooms which were being newly white-washed for the arrival of the Police. (No soldiers had ever been near them.) The place had formerly been run by the Sisters as a kindergarten for small children in the neighbourhood. The nun laughed when I told what had been said about the convent.

"We have not felt less nervous for months," she



explained. "We were simply informed that the school was closed, and that the rooms must be ready by such and such a date. The changes are being paid for by the Police. In addition we are to be paid a regular rent.

"It is sad that we shall no longer be able to teach the children, because that was what we had been trained to do and we loved it. But our work will go on. We shall actually be better off financially than we were before and we hope to be able to help those who need material assistance. As for safety, we feel glad rather than otherwise that the police will be here, with all these Communists about."

There is the famous case of the Servites of Innsbruck. Vastly varying versions of arrests on the grand scale were circulated in the British press. To the average reader it sounded like the prelude to a massacre. Yet here is what actually happened.

Nine members of the Servite community were charged with certain offences. Not one of them was actually arrested or locked up. In due course the charges were gone into and it was found that they could not be proceeded with, with the exception of one lay brother who was, it is believed justly, accused of immorality. As regards the Servites as a whole, the State had acted rashly. The monks were found to be entirely innocent of the charges made against them.

Subsequently the Church authorities demanded that some sort of acknowledgement of their mistake

should be made by those responsible for the charges: particularly as the case by this time had achieved unpleasant publicity across Europe. It was only fair to the Servite Community that their innocence should be as publicly vindicated. To this the Government did in fact agree, and an acknowledgment was made over the wireless some time later. It was unfortunate that the announcement was made at seven in the morning, when hardly anyone heard it. But it was made.

Those are but three cases of "persecution stories" which were misrepresented in the foreign press. There were others. They are given as showing the importance of trying hard to keep an objective view of the whole affair, and the difficulty of obtaining such a view without repeated visits to the country.

Minor inaccuracies have been almost too numerous to correct. It was reported, for instance, that a large number of valuables had been stolen from the Archbishop's Palace in the Stephansplatz. In fact some have been ruined, but none stolen. There are people who tell you confidently that the entire stock of a famous monastery library in Vienna has been spirited away to Berlin and the monks are too frightened to admit it—but if you visit this place you find monks not in the least afraid to show you over the famous library, which is intact. Thousands of Catholics were furious when they learnt that the silver belonging to the famous shrine of Mariazell

had been confiscated: but at the time of writing that silver is still there.

For all these inaccuracies, both sides are to blame: the Catholics for spreading them without a trace of verification, the National-Socialist State for making it next to impossible, as a general rule, to discover the truth at all.

. . . . .

The fact of the matter is that the Church in Austria has not been robbed crudely, as the Jews were robbed. No gangs of Party men have entered Catholic houses and helped themselves. The State has found other methods for milking the Church of her wealth.

Although no artistic objects have been stolen, a large number have been destroyed on the grounds that they were either politically inflammatory or merely objectionable to the State. Alternatively, the Party has a knack of regretting these acts which occur, they say, without their knowledge. This applies as much to crucifixes as it does to the houses of certain priests in Linz, or the shattered windows of the Archbishop's Palace.

Dues and rents owed to monasteries have either been confiscated, or declared null and void. In certain areas where the land is owned by monastic Orders, the peasants have been told that there is no longer any obligation to pay dues. Some have even been ordered not to pay. The monasteries

that have suffered most in this respect are Melk, Klosterneuburg, Lambach and Kremsmunster.

Just as the Cistercians at Merrerau had to give up their freehold, so there were confiscations at Salzburg among a community that for generations had done nothing but good for the people. Girls who entered certain convents were forbidden to give their money to the Order that they joined, on the ground that when they joined such an Order their money belonged automatically to the State.

The Alumnat, a Fund founded for aged clergy, disappeared. It was appropriated by the State.

The Catholic Teachers and Education Organization Fund, into which the parents of poor children had up till 1938 been paying small sums of money annually, was declared invalid. The parents have been told that they owe the State ten years back contributions, and have been asked to pay it. The Reich claims that all the money should have gone to the State in the first place.

In every monastery and church, in 1938 and 1939, an inventory was made of all valuables. This was to prepare for the introduction of a Property Tax similar to that in Germany.

For the most part, buildings and furniture taken over by the State have not been paid for. Only the Army and Police pay regular rents. For example the Sacré Coeur has not received a penny: and despite an official report to the contrary, no

compensation has been paid for the 1,240 smashed windows of the Archbishop's Palace in Vienna.

The press has toned down its attacks against the Church: but for a while it did not stint its sarcasm or its sneers. The Viennese edition of the *Beobachter*, speaking of "poisonous mushrooms" and the "catty prudence of the clericals," made a direct attack on the Jesuits ("The Pope's Light Cavalry") in which it said: "The Jesuits' method of action is persistent camouflage. All they can vindicate for themselves is the honour of having founded, in Paraguay, the first Communist state. . . . Anyway we are not going to be imposed upon by the spineless spiritual snakes. No-one can expect the State to feed them."

Language more outspoken, during the early days of the regime in Austria, was used by the mob who abused the clergy in the streets.

Church and priests on their side have had their powers of expression gagged. After the suppression of Catholic papers, there remained only two methods of communication—through placards in the Church porch, and through parish magazines. But both are subject to strict censorship. Parish magazines, by an ordinance of 1938, are allowed only to mention "Notices of baptism, marriage, etc., times of service, holy reading and local memorial services."

Personally, the average Catholic in Austria has

been through hell. He has suffered incomparably more than the Catholic of the Alt Reich. He has been treated with greater contempt, subjected to more abuse and forced to endure greater humiliation. In Germany proper, from the early days when the Bavarian Bishops condemned the Christianity that was not the Christianity of Christ, the Catholic could feel that at least to some degree the hierarchy was behind him in his struggle for those principles which he had been taught to fight for and respect. In Austria the average Catholic had the foundations of his belief swept from under his feet by the surrender—the willing surrender, it seemed—of the clergy. One of the most cynical remarks made about Austria in those frightful days—that like a cocotte she had defended her honour as long as she thought the decencies demanded, reserving her enthusiasm for the final submission—has a grain of truth embedded in the sneer. To the hundreds of thousands of Catholics who in the spring of 1938 were prepared to “suffer shame for Jesus’ sake,” the submission carried with it a particular humiliation of its own.

It was not as if they were exempt from beastliness in the ordinary way. Germany has seldom witnessed such scenes of heathen obscenity as Vienna went through in March and April of that year. Bands of young Viennese National-Socialists, triumphant at last after their years of waiting, marched through the streets singing indecent songs

against the priesthood and the Papacy. They were allowed absolute freedom. Priests were molested on their way to and from the sick. Nuns were insulted in public. And it is a curious thing, which all Austrians will admit, that the one moderate, restraining force in those days in Vienna was—the German regular Army. The Reichswehr behaved magnificently. Both officers and men, in a difficult situation, were a credit to the German Army. The S.A. and S.S., members of the Party, do not come into this category: they behaved abominably. But in a story where so much is filthy, credit must be given to the discipline, moderation and understanding of the regular troops of the Reich. In not a single known instance did they commit either a beastly or an unchivalrous act. They set an example which neither the S.S. nor the S.A. made the slightest attempt to follow. Those days in Vienna showed up once again the gulf between the true Germany, and the character of the Party that rules it.

By the end of March, what remained of a Catholic press in Austria had been suppressed. During the same week the Bishop of Salzburg was temporarily thrown—"for his own safety"—into a prison cell. Between May and June Catholic organizations outside the school were dissolved. In the summer, while I was there, the new marriage laws were read aloud from Catholic pulpits: laws by which every Catholic had to go through a civil ceremony.

This legislation was contrary to canon law, but the Church was already so helpless that it was actually announced to the faithful by the Church itself. "Within three months of the annexation of Austria the whole organization of the Church, apart from purely pastoral or liturgical functions, was in ruins."<sup>1</sup>

On October 7 and 8 occurred the famous riots in Vienna. Ten thousand Catholics, it is estimated, who had been to Benediction in the Cathedral on the evening of the 7th, demonstrated their loyalty before the Cardinal's Palace. They were broken up by uniformed S.A. "The assaulted Catholics included priests and women."<sup>2</sup>

On the following evening the Palace was attacked, all its windows smashed, much of its interior destroyed, by an organized mob. Attempts were made to set it on fire, while the crowd below screamed for the Cardinal and cried "Send him to Dachau." One old priest was flung bodily through a window into the square below. A few days later a vast procession filed past the Palace carrying infamous and disgusting banners.<sup>3</sup>

By this time 46,000 Austrians had formally left the Church.

<sup>1</sup> *National-Socialism and the Roman Catholic Church*, by Dr. N. Micklem, p. 214.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, October 8, 1938.

<sup>3</sup> Similar scenes occurred at Königsbrunn this year, when the Cardinal was "pelted with rotten eggs and potatoes." (*The Times*, July 5, 1939.)



By the autumn, in addition to the closing of the schools and the dismissal of teachers who did not conform to the new ideology, the funds of the University of Salzburg had been sequestered. The entire monastery of St. Lamprecht had been closed down, as was later that of the Ritter-Orden near Vienna. The Theological Faculty of Innsbruck had been suppressed in August. The *Volksbund*, largest Catholic organization in Austria, was "liquidated."

Before the end of the year more monasteries were receiving the attentions of the Secret Police, and other theological seminaries had been dissolved. The Jesuits of Canisianum came home one evening to find the S.S. in possession—smoking cigars, drinking, and with their own supply of women for the evening. A friend of mine whose flat was raided by a dozen drunken S.S. men at one in the morning can even now scarcely speak of what she had to go through during those hours. Hospitals were told to introduce the rule that dying patients were not to be allowed the Last Sacraments unless they asked for, and signed, a special declaration—which in their severe illness they were not always able to do. Another friend, in a good position, was expelled for wearing a crucifix. Priests were sent to prison for criticizing the pogrom. School teachers began to starve. A Holiday of Obligation was "cancelled" at twenty-four hours' notice. All sermons were attended by secret police for any suggestion of criticism of the

regime. Priests moved through Vienna wearing workmen's clothing: no criminal hunted for some abominable crime was ever forced to their humiliation. And in the Hotel Metropol, headquarters of the Gestapo, Schuschnigg had become a sick, white-headed man, his head bowed before the violent light that beat down upon him, month after month, in solitary confinement. What must his thoughts have been during that long summer and winter that have turned again to summer, as he has sat alone pondering upon the fate of Catholic Austria?

Dachau has been always full.

The Mother Superior of a well-known convent approached one of the petty officials, now become a Party man of standing, who typified the new autocracy. Her convent had been closed down by the police.

"You have taken away our school, and we have no more money to buy bread," she told him. "Can you give me some food to take back to the Convent?"

The official laughed in her face and answered: "Go round to the chemist and buy some poison. Then you and the Sisters will all get what you want, and doubtless go to heaven."

. . . . .

## XVII

### PRISON

THE F hrer sometimes keeps the promises that he makes to his own people. When he assured them that all opponents of his regime would be attacked with "brutal ruthlessness" and that the Party would "not hesitate to adapt them to the interests of the State by means of the Concentration Camp," he was uttering no idle threat. A Concentration Camp in modern Germany can mean the lowest depths of human cruelty, the home of an organized sadism which defies civilization itself. It would be wrong to assume that the details of these places were born in the F hrer's brain. He simply puts in charge of them men whom he can trust to "adapt" the prisoners to "the interests of the State" by methods so firm as to be for the most part unprintable. Places like Oranienburg, B rgermoor and Dachau have been the scenes of sadistic cruelty more degrading by far than the most savage rites of any eastern tribe.

There are no statistics about the Concentration Camps. Nobody knows how many men are to-day living in these secret hells. No bureau of the Propaganda Ministry will answer the inquirer who seeks to find out the death rate at Oranienburg, the

day's routine at Börgermoor. It is not even known how many such Camps exist, though it was reliably reported in 1937<sup>1</sup> that forty more were then in course of erection. Only one British journalist, Gedye, has been inside the electrified barbed wire and past the machine-gun posts that surround Dachau, but he was sent there on the Führer's birthday, when the men were not working; and he was absolutely forbidden either to see the "obstinate" cases or to talk privately with any of the prisoners. One wretched creature was even forced by the authorities to play the mandolin for Gedye's benefit, to show how happy they all were.

"When a batch of prisoners is brought to a Concentration Camp," writes E. O. Lorimer,<sup>2</sup> "a usual procedure is to keep them standing for two, four, six, even ten hours at a stretch, and then leave them three days without food. After that they are put through a course of punitive drill . . . hounded round the prison yard at the double with parcels and suitcases in their hands, lashed with staves or rubber truncheons if they flag; alternatively they are given a Nazi flogging, face, back, legs, arms and hands, that will leave them immobilized and in torment for weeks. They are thrown to recover, or not, on the stone floor of a cell, or at best on a plank bench.

"Sometimes the prisoner is thrashed as he sits,

<sup>1</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, August 2.

<sup>2</sup> *What Hitler Wants*, p. 172.

sometimes he is flung to the ground, sometimes he is trussed to a triangle. . . . To add to his humiliation the victim is sometimes given half a pint of castor oil. . . . ”

These prisoners, remember, are men who in many cases were formerly professors, city aldermen, writers, artists and clergy. They have had no charge made against them, and have not been tried. For the justice of the Gestapo over-rides all legal administration. It is not answerable to any court of law. They therefore have no idea whether they are to remain in the Camp only a few months—or a lifetime.

At Oranienburg, 138 men had 3 cubic metres of air space apiece, and one small window. For months the washing arrangements consisted of a single pump for 1,100 men. Apart from their work, the elderly were made to do “obstacle races,” get up constantly through the night, and run round the Camp while the S.A. guards tripped them up and beat them for falling. Cripples and the sick had to do as much, if not more, than the healthy ones. For punishment the Camp Commandant, Schäfer, invented the upright coffin: a stone cell with a floor space of 2 ft. by 2 ft. 6 ins., where a man could just stand, squeezed, against the sides. After fourteen hours of this his legs would be cut and swollen out of recognition—and he would be taken out for an “obstacle race.” One man, Neumann,

is known to have spent eight days and eight nights in one of Schäfer's coffins. An alternative punishment was to tie the wrists to the ankles for two to three days at a stretch.<sup>1</sup>

Martha Dodd, daughter of the American Ambassador in Berlin, is prepared to swear to the truth of the experiences of a young writer who after being knouted on the legs with a stick full of rusty nails, was lined up with other prisoners for interrogation. When they opened their mouths to answer, lighted cigarettes were flung down their throats. "Also he and other inmates were knocked down to a kneeling position and forced to open their mouths while the guards urinated in them."<sup>2</sup> The utmost sexual humiliation was forced upon many of the prisoners in a proportion of the Camps. The S.A., in whose hands the organization of these Camps is entrusted, have been described by Hitler as "the chosen educators of the German People."

Not all the Camps are bad. I have myself met prisoners released from some of them who deny all stories of torture, and whose physical appearance has supported their statement: just as I have met others, in an appalling physical and mental state, too broken in every way even to discuss what they have been through.

<sup>1</sup> *Oranienburg*, by Gerhart Seger.

<sup>2</sup> *My Tears in Germany*, by Martha Dodd, p. 257.

Such was the institution whose shadow fell across Austria the moment the Anschluss was complete. Austria gave more than her share to these places "of education." Dachau will go down in history as a name of horror and humiliation, a disgrace to the German people. Within its electrified wire have died many of Austria's best men, maintaining to the last their belief in their own country, their faith in God: defying through all that torture and disgust, the whips and degradations of their tormentors. To many of them death brought a quick release. The relatives in Vienna received a wire to the effect that such and such a prisoner had committed suicide, or been shot trying to escape: and in certain cases the body was returned for burial. In others, only a box, with ashes.

But there is an important reservation to be made with respect to the degree to which Catholics actually suffered in these Camps. Just as one must recognize that not all the Camps are bad, so it is also certain that for the most part the worst sufferings were not inflicted upon Catholics. All the prisoners with whom I have spoken are unanimous in declaring that Catholics were infinitely better treated than the Jews. All the vilest tortures were reserved, first for Communists, later for those whose only fault had been their Jewish blood.

A large number of those Catholics who during 1938 found themselves arrested by the Secret

Police for their opinions were never even sent to a Concentration Camp. They have remained in the various State prisons, and recently a large proportion have been released. To get a true picture of what Catholics went through after the Anschluss, it is mercifully not necessary to assume that they invariably went to Dachau.

Life in the "Liesl"—a nickname for one of the most famous Viennese prisons—has been described to me by a man I can trust, now out of Germany, who was arrested for his "violent" Catholic and Legitimist views. He had been a journalist, and had always expressed what he thought: it was inevitable that he would not be tolerated by the new regime. His experience probably approximates much more closely to the average punishment inflicted upon those Catholics who were openly antagonistic than does any description of the horrors of a Concentration Camp.

He was actually arrested at the frontier and for lack of any other charge was accused of carrying firearms, though in fact he carried nothing more dangerous than a pair of spectacles (which were confiscated). After his arrest the original charge was never referred to in any way. It had been only a formality. He was brought back to Vienna by train, having had to pay for the warders' tickets as well as his own, and handed over to the State police. Here is his testimony.



“ I was searched and stripped, and eventually led—half blind without my glasses—to my future home.

“ This was what in ordinary times would have been a cell for a single prisoner. Already it held five men when I was pushed inside. There were sacks to sleep on.

“ Washing time was between five and five-thirty every morning. Breakfast at seven-thirty, consisting of a dark brown brew of some kind, and a quarter of a roll. From eight to twelve was our free time, and then at mid-day came a soup-plate full of vegetables—beans, cabbage, rice, etc. Our next meal came at six, this time a yellowish fluid, indefinable, with another quarter roll. Between seven and eight in the evening we made our beds (i.e. shook our sacks out) and then tried to sleep.

“ For each cell one home-made lavatory in the corner had to suffice. This played a most important part in our daily life for apart from anything else the lavatory paper came in most useful for making playing cards—or, when some newcomer managed to smuggle in tobacco, for rolling cigarettes. Each of these cigarettes was smoked in strict rotation by the six inmates. We were all professional men except for one actual criminal who strongly resented our intrusion into what should have been his cell.

“ Once a day our lavatory in the corner received a

nominal clean-up by Czech or Hungarian prisoners. They did not care for the job, and there was no warder there to see that they did it properly.

“ After the first few days we began to suffer very real hunger, particularly a Bank Manager who had never known a day’s hunger in his life before; but mercifully after a fortnight our ration was slightly increased, and those of us who had no Jewish blood were given cheese and a sausage.

“ Every day we had the so-called *Marodervisite*—two little doctors came round who insisted on our taking bromide and aspirin every morning. The effect of this after a few weeks, you can imagine.

“ I was soon separated from my comrades as most of them were Jews, and I was put in a non-Jewish cell. We could hear the screams of thrashings, but in each case it was a Jew being thrashed. We Catholics were not badly treated. After a few more weeks we were allowed short walks round a yard—here again the privilege was only for those without Jewish blood.

“ We used to be got out of our cells at one in the morning to answer sets of questions about our previous activities. These questions included ‘Have you ever made love to a Jewess.’ ‘Do you really think Adolf Hitler wishes to harm the Church?’

“ During these weeks only one of us actually lost his reason, and only one actually tried to commit suicide, though many of us spoke of it. It was

astonishing how quickly most of us adapted ourselves to the conditions.

“One day at long last came the laconic order: ‘Pack your things.’ Within half an hour I was in the ‘Green Henry.’ I had no idea of my destination. I sat there alone, thinking with terror of Dachau. But very soon I was put down—and found myself transferred to the Court House, where I was to spend the next six weeks. I had not of course been tried on any charge.

“At the Court House we lived in comparative luxury. Although six of us again shared a cell designed for one, we had a table, and blankets. I was with senior army officers, a lawyer, a professor and a baron. We were all either Catholic or Legitimist, or both. The food was better than before as we got potatoes.

“Every now and then we would hear of a friend gone to Dachau. That was the darkest shadow of all. And one day they took the Baron: one of the finest men that ever lived—a great Catholic and a great Austrian. We just shook hands with him, and said goodbye and he laughed and said we must all meet again. He shook hands with the warder and gave the man a present and the next moment he was being marched down the corridor. Within a few weeks he was dead: one of the finest and straightest people that ever lived, one of hundreds who had to die because they loved Austria and their

Faith too much. He had never been charged and of course never brought to trial.

“At last came the day when I was again marched out of the cell. I was interrogated by an officer who behaved admirably. He asked certain questions and I replied. There was nothing of the Prussian about him. He took no advantage of my nervousness.

“Three weeks later came the order again: ‘Pack your things.’ I had no idea whether it was to be Dachau or freedom. One week later I had crossed the frontier—on condition that I never again, so long as I live, set foot in Austria.”

Thousands of Catholics went through similar experiences. A great number of them have been released, and sent out of Austria. They have to start life afresh in a foreign country, without capital, but free.

Compared to the Jews, Austrian Catholics have been lucky.

. . . . .

## XVIII

### AUSTRIA : 1939

THE Viennese edition of the *Völkischer Beobachter* of February 5, 1939, quotes Bürckel, Vienna District Party Leader, as saying: "Certain political conceptions must vanish by force of circumstances, such as 'Money is a power, industry is a power, the Church is a power.' These power groups must be transformed—and have already to a great extent been transformed—into a kind of service-relationship to the totality."

The German language is rich in forms of expression which use six words when one would do. To "transform the Church power-group into a kind of service-relationship to the totality" meant further persecution. The struggle between Church and State, which in the Alt Reich practically ceased during 1939, was continued with increasing severity in Austria. It proceeded along normal lines: that is to say that it made no direct attack upon Catholic dogma, nor did it attempt to interfere with the offering up of the Mass. But it struck a few final blows at Catholic education—or rather, at what was left of it—and it continued with increasing force its campaign against the financial position (and integrity) of the Catholic clergy.

The authorities have extended their censorship to the Catechism itself. A new Catechism has now been distributed to the schools from which the following points of Catholic doctrine have been deleted:

1. The Infallibility of the Pope.
2. The Church's claim to be the only true Church.
3. The indissolubility of marriage.

Early in March the Statthalter, or Governor, of the Ostmark issued a decree ordering the immediate closing of all remaining private denominational schools in what was formerly Austria. This decree included not only elementary and high schools, but all teachers' colleges still remaining, commercial and trades schools, boarding schools, and women's vocational schools. It was the coup de grâce.

On May 1, 1939, a new law, combining three famous decrees of 1938 (those of 26.9.38, 29.10.38 and 20.11.38) concerning the relations between pupil and teacher in the new State schools, came into force. Under the conditions of this new decree, which also applies to the whole of Austria:

1. All teachers must in principle do everything possible to avoid making their influence favourable towards participation in any Confessional organization or service.

2. No Confessional "arrangements" (such as services, devotions, Confession, Holy Communion, Confirmation, etc.) may be made by the school as

such, or take place in any schoolroom. It is also forbidden to all teachers to draw the attention of pupils to such services.

3. Any participation of the school in such Church affairs is prohibited. In these are included Mass, processions, religious examinations, etc. Funerals are excepted in the case of the deceased having a particularly close connection with the school.

4. Outside school hours it is not permitted for teachers either to conduct school children to church or to control them at church services. All corporative participation of school groups in such services is forbidden.

5. The National-Socialist school authorities do not admit of any Church influence on the school premises. Teachers and priests are not allowed to ask the children whether they are attending the Church regularly, or to refer to religion at any time in a favourable manner.

In a notice (Z.Pr.355/30.IV.39) signed by Dr. Stögermeyer and circulated privately to National-Socialist school authorities only, the necessity for fulfilling the directions of the above decree (Z.II. 3480/25.IV.39) is strongly stressed. It is pointed out again that all organized participation of children in church affairs must come to an end once and for all, and that such participation is in no way compatible with National-Socialist doctrine. Even participation of the schools in religious processions must be

considered as out of the question. Neither the decree nor the instructions were made available to the public: they were sent direct to the authorities concerned and were to be considered as confidential.

Meanwhile the actual amount of religious education available for children steadily decreases. Although nominally every school gives two hours a week to the subject, it is in fact being taught less and less. The children are dissuaded from asking for it, and by a decree issued early in 1939, boys over fourteen are entitled to make up their own minds as to whether they shall have it or not. That is to say it has been made an optional subject in the high schools: and is not given in the elementary schools unless sufficient parents demand it.

In the Vienna diocese alone, when I was last there, in the summer, children in twenty-four schools of the diocese were receiving no religious instruction of any kind. The teachers from these schools had either been transferred or removed, and no substitutes had arrived to take their places. There did not seem the slightest likelihood of any such substitutes arriving.

The fact has got to be realized. Catholic teaching in Austria is finished. Even St. Joseph's in Salzburg, where the clergy did wonderful work helping backward children, was closed by order in February. Seminaries are following suit. The teaching of the Gospel has never been made legally a crime by the



State, but it has been treated exactly as if it were a criminal activity. It has been stamped out.

In Austria there are still children who receive instruction from their mother, their father, from a parish priest: but all organized teaching of it, confined to those two nominal, precarious hours per week in the State schools, is as nothing beside the thoroughness, efficiency, zeal and force with which the doctrine of National-Socialism, dressed up with music and uniforms and the beating of the drum, is pumped into Austria's next generation.

. . . . .

In May 1939 the State delivered its most shattering blow up to that time on the financial management of the Church. It decreed that while the Church was for the time being to be allowed to make collections, the disposal of all money so collected was to come within the jurisdiction of the State.

The State, that is to say, appropriated the finances of the Church.

It is impossible, at the moment of writing, to predict with any certainty the final decision with regard to financial management. Already all the necessary inventories of Church property have been made: already taxes have been levied on gifts and legacies to the Church which are legally tax free. Everything points to a more thorough and possibly disastrous financial attack upon the Church. Not only will it be brought to conform to the customs of

the Alt Reich: but it will be brought to its knees in the material sense. Already a number of Funds, such as the famous Kongrua Fund for aged clergy, have simply been confiscated by the State authorities.

The Party attitude towards Church Funds is given in the issue of the *Schwarze Korps*, organ of the S.S., of February 16, 1939.

"We look upon the Churches," runs the article, "with their countless art treasures, unique in the world, not as the creation of a religion but as products of the German soul. . . . As ever before, the National-Socialist State will exert every effort to preserve these great works of the past, whether it be a question of the masterpiece of an artistic genius or the work of some sensitive peasant craftsman whose humble name has long been blown away by the gales of time.

"But we know how to distinguish between organization and possessions, between priestcraft and ecclesiastical property. The activities of officials concerned with the religions can only interest the State when the limits of that sphere, which nature and tradition has allocated to the Church, have been transgressed. When however in spite of its own wealth, the Church does not maintain properly the German cultural treasures at its disposal, the maintenance of these works—created by the people and therefore belonging to them—must be made obligatory. For in more than one instance, history

has shown that, just as priests die, so do religions perish. But the peoples, conscious of their blood, remain throughout the thousands of years."

No-one who has watched the prologues to previous press campaigns can fail to notice here the symptoms of another. Even the argument is familiar. Because the People, the Volk, come first, therefore they shall inherit the earth. It goes even further: it claims, in effect, that every violin made by Stradivarius belongs, not to those who bought these violins, not to those who received them as gifts, but to Stradivarius himself. As an argument it is pitiful enough: but it is not hard to visualize from such articles a near future in which the riches of the Church will be robbed in the name of God and of Germany. The great monasteries will be declared unworthy of the treasures that they own. They will be accused of exploiting the people, and taking for themselves things that belong to the Volk, and the State: and in the name of the Volk these things will be taken from the Church, and kept by the State.

. . . . .

During 1939 the straightforward harrying of the Church also continued in Austria.

Monasteries—such as that of the Franciscans at Salzburg—continued to be taken over by the State for the use of the Army or the Police.

The clergy, though no longer greeted by the abuse

of those first few weeks of the regime, still receive little courtesy from the Party. For example the Archbishop of Salzburg, Mgr. Waitz, was forced to leave his house there on the ground that it was State property. He received no previous notice of this decision and learnt of it for the first time when it was published in the official Party press.

It has become increasingly difficult for Catholics in the professions. All over Austria men and women have lost their jobs for professing openly their Faith. The Party has never attempted to conceal the fact that only its own members stand a good chance of obtaining the best positions in civil employment. Sometimes there has even been a "drive" against Catholics in a business, and all those who refused to sign the form by which they are given the chance to deny the Church, dismissed. In one of the great Vienna hospitals where Catholic nursing sisters have worked for years, the entire staff was thrown out and their places taken by National-Socialist "Brown Sisters". At the beginning of May, according to the Vienna edition of the *Beobachter*, the Gauleiter of Salzburg ordered the entire community of the Nursing Order of the Sisters of Charity to leave the town of Kufstein. According to the official account these Sisters of Charity tortured a dying man, "a workman named Andreas Ferner, by interrupting his cries of 'Long live Germany' with exclamations of 'Long live Christ'."

The campaign against the monasteries continued along familiar lines. One example—over a dozen monks of the Benedictine monastery of Göttweig, near Krems, were arrested, including the Abbot. The charge is one of financial maladministration, and includes accusations of financial irregularities against the monks themselves. In various parts of Austria the monasteries had to accept National-Socialist “supervisors” whose purpose it was to conduct an inquiry into the whole administration of the monastery.

In most of the country villages there is no sign of persecution. Life continues fairly placidly, and the peasant still goes to Mass, or prays before the crucifixes on the mountain sides and puts gentians at the feet of Our Lady. Out in the country, ever since the Anschluss, there has never been the same discontent that is now apparent in places like Vienna. The peasant is rooted too deeply in fundamental things to be shaken lightly by the force even of a totalitarian regime.

But in the towns it is different. Here everything is sharper, the impact of the new regime far harder. Here you notice the lack of food, and the workers find themselves enmeshed in the new regulations: here the men are marching and the bombers roar above. Here the Church struggle, in the same way, is harder and more defined. It is here, first of all, that the effects of the new education will be felt.

With the great monasteries it is the same. While the parish priest carries on more or less unmolested, the great monastic Orders wake every morning to anxiety and fear. Indeed, the broad division is clear enough, and natural: where you have education, there is a struggle with the regime, and where there is less education there is little struggle.

. . . . .

The Church appeared to yield to National-Socialism when Austria was incorporated into the Reich. It is only fair to add that since that surrender both priests and faithful have remained true; they have rallied their forces to the Cross and have defended it.

The attack has now passed from education to finance. The clergy never had to sustain in Austria attacks similar to the currency charges and morality trials of Germany: indeed there has not been a single currency case reported for the Ostmark.

Every inducement has been put forward for Catholics to leave the Church. Of 1,050 parish priests and 750 members of monastic orders in the diocese of Vienna, two seculars and three monks have apostasized since the Anschluss. Of 170 students for the priesthood not one has left.

In Austria as a whole it is reckoned that 70,000 men and women have signed forms declaring that they break away from the Catholic Church. Of these a number were lax Catholics who had left the

Church in fact before the arrival of the new regime.

In its broad result the effects of the clash between Church and State in Austria are similar to those in the Alt Reich. Those who are still Catholic, are better Catholics than they ever were. On balance the Faith is far stronger, far more defined, far more sure of itself, than it has been in the past.

But there is no Catholic education to speak of, and the Church is threatened financially.

As with Germany, a tremendous lot depends upon how long the National-Socialist regime survives: or more exactly, whether it can last another five or six years. If it does so, an entire generation of young Austrians, with their cousins of Bavaria and the youth of Prussia, will enter the world convinced of Germany's divine mission, of the innate superiority of German blood and German soil, and of the "poisonous" weakness of organized religion. What these young men will do with the world when they inherit it, can only be imagined: all that we know for certain is that they will have been taught since they were children that they have the right to conquer it.

The outlook is black for Austria. And yet if you have been inside the tall, dark coolness of the Stephanskirche and stood to pray before that shrine there, you get a great feeling that Stephan's steeple will never gaze down upon a Vienna that is not Catholic. There you will stand between a cripple

and a soldier and the mother of a family, and the light of the candles will flicker across their quiet faces and you will feel sure that somehow these people, lazy, haphazard, romantic but fundamentally *true*, will not allow an upstart Faith to steal the glory of their own.

In the Austrian villages you scarcely feel that any attack upon the Church has even begun. Still, on May evenings the small churches will be packed as the men and women, in from the fields, come to do honour to Our Lady. Still, early on Sunday mornings, they crowd the Communion rails in their gay dresses. In Vienna, "Heil Hitler!" has indeed largely become the greeting when people meet. But out in the Austrian countryside, and up in the Austrian hills, the peasant still smiles to you and says "Grüss Gott!"

. . . . .



## XIX

### THE NATIONAL-SOCIALIST'S REPLY

"In Austria," says the National-Socialist, "we were up against a problem in many ways more difficult than that which had confronted us in the Alt Reich. We found a country riddled with superstition, priest-ridden, under the control of a government that was literally rotten with clericalism. This clerical control worked against the obvious wish of the majority to return to the Reich. It was as logical as it was imperative that we should take more decisive measures than had been necessary in our own country.

"There was not a shadow of doubt that the Church was abusing its power, and helping itself both to money and property to which the State had prior right. But so strong had the Church become that the State was too weak to claim those things that lawfully belonged to it. The majority, if not all, of the changes we have made, which the foreign press has seen fit to call confiscation, and worse, have in fact been merely re-adjustments which have restored to the State dues and monies which belong to it in law.

"The real leaders of the Church, as for example Cardinal Innitzer, realized from the beginning that

we were right and did not hesitate to say so. But the monasteries, with their vast wealth and their enormous rents, have naturally opposed us. And here is another point which the foreign press is careful to omit: namely, that had we *wanted* to show up the moral shortcomings of a great number of these so-called monks, we could have shown the world a state of affairs in Austria which would have shamed once and for all the claims of the Roman Catholic Church in regard to piety and clean living. It is an open secret that we have now in our archives enough evidence against the great Orders as well as individual clergy in the Ostmark to make those gentlemen feel extremely nervous, for they would be hard put to it to prove their innocence. We have however decided, at any rate for the present, that the dirty linen of the Austrian hierarchy is no immediate concern of ours. All we demand is their allegiance to the new spirit of Germany, and their co-operation in bringing Austria into line with the vitality of the resurrected Reich.

“What happened to education there was inevitable, since as you know, we claim the youth of the country just as much as we claim the people. The children of Austria were being brought up in all the old superstitions: the teaching they received ran counter to the teaching now general in Adolf Hitler's Germany. Therefore it had to be subordinated to it. No authoritarian State can countenance

a system of education that actually undermines the policy and principles of the country in which it is active. It would have been madness on the part of National-Socialism had it allowed the priests and nuns to continue fostering a spirit of sabotage and discontentment among the young. Nor were they by nature even capable of paying attention—sufficient attention—to the biological and physical demands of the new German educative system. There was in their teaching no reference whatever to the great heritage of blood and soil which is part and parcel of the National-Socialist *Weltanschauung*. Not nearly sufficient stress was laid upon the necessity of building up in the Ostmark a new generation of virile, eager, efficient men and women, ready to dedicate themselves to the ideal of a greater Germany: instead they were simply reproducing the lazy superstitions of a dead regime.

“ We have been able to bring about the necessary changes in a comparatively short space of time, partly because we had in this instance the leaders of the Church itself behind us, partly because we had learnt the lesson in Bavaria. Already National-Socialist teaching, under trustworthy teachers, is general in the schools of the Ostmark: while those still anxious to receive religious instruction are perfectly free to ask for it. This would not be so, had we had any intention of actually persecuting the Church in Austria. And indeed, in addition to the right

reserved to the boys of over fourteen to demand religious instruction, there is in the elementary schools a system of religious teaching still in operation whereby at least two hours a week are still devoted to the subject. That scarcely sounds like a persecution of the Church!

"It is true that the clergy were submitted to certain indignities in the early weeks after the Anschluss. These we deplore. They were committed by hotheads who, having been suppressed during all the time of maladministration by Dollfuss and Schuschnigg, were perhaps too eager to 'blow off steam' when the day of triumph came. But as you know, no such indignities are now inflicted upon the clergy; and we did in fact take disciplinary measures against those National-Socialists who forgot themselves on those occasions. In the hopelessly exaggerated case of the attack upon the Archbishop's Palace in Vienna, the police were powerless to prevent the spontaneous indignation of the people.

"Despite all the ludicrous stories that have appeared in the foreign press, and despite the torrent of lies that has poured from the Catholic press in particular, we maintain that there has been no persecution of the Church in Austria. As with the Alt Reich, it has been simply and solely a question of bringing the Church into line with National-Socialism. Large numbers of the priests are

entirely with us in this ambition: but those that deliberately put obstacles in our way, those clergy who 'martyr' themselves in the eyes of their congregations in order to hinder the activities of the State, must expect, logically, to meet with the disapproval of the State. As we have so often been forced to point out, and as the Führer himself has stressed, we have no wish to harm or hurt those clergy who remain at their posts watching over the spiritual cares of the people: but those who poach upon the preserves of the State, and arrogate to themselves a political authority to which they have no right, must not be surprised if they are punished by the State.

"We are hopeful, however, that the problem will soon be solved, without further ill-will, or the use of strong disciplinary measures. Already the youth of the country is with us. Soon all Austria will be marching behind the banners of the Party and all its energy and enthusiasm will be united towards the realization of Germany's historic destiny."

. . . . .

Friends of mine who have met Bürckel, the man who was ordered to "clean up" the Catholic Saar for Germany and has now been entrusted with a similar task in Austria, maintain that he is not the monster that Catholic Vienna makes him out to be. In his office he is the perfect National-Socialist: but out in the Wiener-Wald, with a glass of new

wine on the wooden table, he is a human being who realizes that he has been asked to change the very nature of a people. His speeches are arrogant and vulgar to a degree that nauseates the Viennese every bit as much as they infuriate them; but his worst enemies admit that he could have been more cruel, more vindictive, had he wanted to. Men who know him well have sworn to me that at heart he understands the Viennese temperament, and that he has no personal wish to inflict more pain on it than necessary. Any man given orders from the Wilhelmstrasse to make Catholicism in Austria a State perquisite has got an unenviable job. Bürckel is universally despised and hated in Catholic circles: no man in his position could be otherwise. But had you been with me in Vienna on that grey November day when the State vented its sadistic fury on the Jews you would realize too that he has not been so malignant as he might: or perhaps he has not dared.

It is an unpalatable but undeniable truth that the worst atrocities against the Church in Austria have been committed by Austrians. The small official, tasting power for the first time, has behaved like a beast the moment he was free to wear a Swastika on his arm. Intelligent National-Socialists in Germany claim—and it is only fair that their claim should be put forward—that officials in the Alt Reich would never have behaved quite so badly as

did the petty officials of Vienna. It is certainly true that they surpassed in vindictiveness even the exploits of their forerunners in Bavaria and Berlin: and it is certainly true that in the spring of 1938 only one thing prevented the atrocities committed against both Jews and Catholics being even more degrading than they were—and that was the presence of the Reichswehr, the German regular Army. These had in a large measure been withdrawn before the pogrom of November. The attack upon the Archbishop's Palace was made by peasants who had been hired for the occasion and brought to Vienna by bus: many of them had no idea where the Stephansplatz was, or what they were exactly supposed to do when they got there. All they knew was they were going to receive a little money, and get a free ride back. But they were Austrians: that cannot be denied.

Finally, as has already been pointed out, the official Party complaint to the effect that many organs of the non-German press have exaggerated events in Austria, is justified. An attempt has been made here to stick to the truth. But it is certainly undeniable that a proportion of the reports that have appeared have allowed their sympathies to over-ride their devotion to plain fact. I think that any impartial judge would divide the blame equally between the Austrian emigrés and the Party tactics.

In April 1939, in a special number devoted to "The Church in Germany" (published almost exactly twelve months after the Anschluss) a propaganda leaflet issued by the Party in Munich could find nothing to say—apart from one reference to the broadcasting of Mass from Vienna—about anything that had happened during that year to the Church in Austria. Any reader who between March 1938 and March 1939 had paid visits to that country was left to wonder—why?



## XX

“ET VERITAS MANET IN AETERNUM”

“A FIGHT against religion,” Mussolini has written, “is a fight against the impalpable—against the intangible; it is open warfare against the spirit in its most profound and most significant force, and it is by this time fully proved that the weapons at the disposal of the State, no matter how sharp they may be, are powerless to inflict any mortal blows on the Church—and by the Church I mean especially the Catholic Church—which emerges invariably triumphant after engaging in the most bitter conflicts. . . . Passive resistance on the part of the priests and of the faithful is sufficient to frustrate the most violent attacks by a State.”<sup>1</sup>

Attacks upon both the Catholic and Protestant Churches in Germany have now continued almost without pause since the accession of National-Socialism to power in Germany. Yet complete victory has so far eluded either side. The State, with its vast resources of material power, with its undisputed sway over all forms of propaganda and the press, with its ability to ruin those who do not bow the knee, has failed to diminish the Faith of the believing German: but equally, organized religion, with its long tradition, its great numerical superiority

<sup>1</sup> *Figaro*, December 18, 1934.

over the Party, its spiritual determination, has not succeeded in saving its own youth from a teaching contrary to that of Christ. Is it really stalemate—or will the Führer make some further move that will bring the Churches to subjection?

Certain aspects of the situation must be underlined again if we are to see clearly how Germany stands in regard to religion now.

1. *Both Hitler and the Party still maintain—at any rate in all statements made for foreign consumption—that there has been at no time any persecution of religion in the Reich.*

From the beginning Hitler passionately desired and obviously needed a united Germany. He found himself the ruler of a land two-thirds Protestant and one-third Catholic. His own philosophy put the State first, and religion afterwards: his philosophy was in fact in itself a new religion, a German Faith. He could not, however, force upon the Churches a formal denial of their own beliefs: he had somehow to find a way whereby he could wean them gradually from their adherence to the Gospel and unite them under the banner of the Swastika. In the Protestant Churches, after a period which included only indirect interference, this was attempted by means of the *Führer Prinzip* and the adoption of Protestant youth: in the Catholic Church, by means of a campaign against the integrity of the Church (largely on the grounds that it was

anti-German) and the adoption of Catholic youth. He won the youth of both denominations: but far from winning over the mass of Christian Germany, he succeeded only in strengthening it in its own Faith. This was because in fact he resorted to methods which can only be defined as persecution.

Inside Germany there has not been much attempt to pretend that the Church was anything but a thorn in the side of the State, to be treated in language that could only be used upon a persecuted people. The official organ of the Reich, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, wrote on April 30, 1937, "The German People, and especially its young folk, know how to judge of people who convert the sacristy into a brothel, and whose perversion does not even shrink before the most sacred action of the Catholic Church, the Communion. . . . What parents conscious of their responsibility could now take the responsibility of entrusting their boys and girls to an organization over a thousand members of which are sexual criminals? "

On April 15, 1937, the *Schwarze Korps*, which is published by the official publishing house of the Party for the edification of the National-Socialist élite, the S.S., wrote:

"That is the pestilential stench of a putrefying world; it stinks to heaven. We are referring to all those scandalous proceedings in those Church circles, both within and without the monasteries, in the

midst of which not one crime is lacking from perjury through incest to sexual murder. . . . Behind the walls of monasteries and in the ranks of the Roman brotherhood what else may have been enacted that is not publicly known and has not been expiated through this world's courts? "

Yet Hitler maintains that he has not attacked the Church.

He has allowed each one of his subalterns—Goebbels, Goering, Rosenberg, Frick, Ley, Streicher, Hess and Baldur von Schirach to subject the Church to abuse that could not find a sale in Leicester Square. During the time of the "Morality Trials" in 1936, the official Party Press, over which he has absolute control, sank to depths a great deal lower than the quieter extracts given above. On the morning after the late Pope's death he allowed a section of the press to spit upon his memory. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that except for certain periods—before the Berlin Olympic Games, before the voting in the Saar, and then again during 1939, when he has been too occupied with foreign affairs—the official press in Germany has been allowed to level any accusations it preferred—pornographic when required—against organized religion.

Yet this man still maintains he has not attacked the Church.

He has always stuck to his contention that the National-Socialist State is a Christian State. And

the Reichsminister for Church Affairs, Dr. Kerrl, on December 9, 1937 (reported in the *Schwarze Korps*) said: "National-Socialism is a religious movement which not only fully recognizes the bond to God and the Divine Order, but lives it. . . . The National-Socialist State wants to bring into expression the divine order in every sphere of life; it supports what is natural, it fights what is against nature. This is our State Religion. This State religion must stand above the denominations. . . ."

It was this same Dr. Kerrl who remarked:

"As Christ in his twelve disciples raised a stock faithful unto martyrdom, whose belief shattered the great Roman Empire, so in Germany to-day, we are experiencing the same thing—Adolf Hitler . . . is the true Holy Ghost."

Yet the corporal swears there has been no interference with Christian dogma. Rosenberg, whose book must be read in every school of the Reich, condemns the Old Testament as a spurious fake and flings aside the Crucifix. The Führer made him supreme head of Cultural Affairs; and still says he has no quarrel with Christianity.

In this land where there is said to be no antagonism to Christian belief as such, the Protestant Army chaplains in December 1937 issued a remarkable Memorandum.<sup>1</sup>

"The new breach which divides the German

<sup>1</sup> See *Der Deutsche in Polen*, February 20, 1938.

people," it says, "is the breach between National-Socialism and Christianity. This fact is repeatedly denied. It is true nevertheless. . . . In the training camps of the Party it is repeatedly explained that National-Socialism has three enemies: Judaism, Masonry and Christianity. Public acceptance of Christianity is regarded, when a new position is to be filled, as a tie that unfits the candidate for service to the State or the Party. . . . The means by which this combat is carried on is the ruthless use of State power. . . . The racial ethic, represented through the Party and the police, armed with all the force of the Totalitarian State, hurls itself against materially helpless Christianity. The situation has become wholly intolerable through the fashion in which these State forces are employed. . . . In Halle, a high functionary of the Storm Troops referred to Christ as 'that swine.' School teachers have repeatedly referred to Jesus in their class-rooms as 'that Jewish tramp.' . . ."

The result of this Memorandum was the famous Army purge.

Yet he says he has no quarrel with Christianity.

From the start he promised to protect the Christian beliefs, and said that he saw in them the best basis for a united Germany. But in a private document issued only to the S.A. (quoted by Dr. Micklem) and commended by their Chief of Staff, Lutze, we read:

"We desire to abstain from forms which are

similar to church celebrations. Such forms are dead. And our National-Socialist philosophy is not a substitute, but something new. . . . A gathering for a solstice-celebration must be so organized that the population will be gripped by the strength of our faith and by the power of our People . . . . Of set purpose the gatherings of Faith, Home, Battle and the like should be held upon a Sunday morning. Hereby Sunday morning preserves, as times change, its definite significance for the S.A. and through them for the people at large. Hence is evolved a custom which for the population will become as customary as once the regular journey was to the service of a philosophy alien to us. . . . It is also self-evident that neither S.A. units nor musical bands, nor individual Storm Troopers, should put themselves at the service of a philosophy alien to us. . . . In the preparation of a room for a gathering the following point is to be observed as a rule. First, all symbols of a past age should be covered up or removed, such as busts of earlier rulers. . . pictures of the Saints, Crucifixes, public house pictures and the like. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

This is important in that it is a genuine document for private consumption, as opposed to the banalities uttered for abroad: and because both S.A. and S.S. are regarded by the Party as the guardians of National-Socialism.

<sup>1</sup> *National Socialism and the Roman Catholic Church*, p. 194.

Yet he says he does not wish to hurt the Christian belief, or has ever interfered with their dogma. But the paganizing of both the S.S. and S.A. continues.

It is important also to realize that these few quotations represent only a minute proportion of the internal evidence that could be brought to prove the genuine intentions of the Reich. Anyone who goes through the files of the *Beobachter* and the *Schwarze Korps* alone soon finds that he has enough material to fill a book. If he should delve into the *Stürmer*, Streicher's pornographic sheet, he finds material that he cannot even print.

So much for what has been published inside Germany.

There is in addition a vast amount of factual evidence.

The currency trials amounted to persecution: the immorality trials even more so. The seven thousand priests and pastors flung into gaol for "abuse of the pulpit" were not all of them mere political agitators, however much the Reich would have us believe that they were. They were men who found their faith being subjected to contumely, and spoke in its defence. The priests in Vienna who were spat on in the streets, the nuns who were abused as they went about their work among the poor, the faithful who lost their livelihood because they would not submit to the new regime, all these men and women were the victims of persecution.



The parents who were blackmailed into voting for a Community school were the subjects of a persecution.

The monastic orders who were dissolved: the Jesuits who were given fourteen days in which to flee: Niemoller, arrested by the Gestapo after the law had said he had no sin: nuns deprived of their legacies, monasteries of their rents, the laity of their jobs—all these have been the victims of a persecution. And those who lay dying in Viennese hospitals, deprived of the Last Sacraments, share with the victims of Dachau and Oranienburg the eternal glory of those who were not ashamed to suffer humiliation for the sake of the Cross.

When National-Socialism came to power it was welcomed by Protestant and Catholic alike. The late Pope himself saw in it a sturdy bulwark against the anti-Christ of Communism. He welcomed the Concordat in the sincere belief that it would protect the rights of the Catholic Church. For a long time he did not criticize the Reich.

But speaking to the College of Cardinals on Christmas Eve, 1937, His Holiness said:

“ We must call things by their right names. In Germany there is in fact a religious persecution. For long they tried to make us believe there was no persecution. We know, however, that there is a grievous persecution, and more even, that there has rarely been a persecution so serious, so painful and

so disastrous in its widespread effects. This is a persecution in which neither the exercise of force, nor the pressure of threats, nor the subterfuges of cunning and artifice, have been spared. . . ."

2. *There is no question that National-Socialism has won the youth of Germany, and wrested it from the control of the Protestant and Catholic Churches.*

The assaults made upon Bavaria, upon the *Evangelische Jugend Deutschlands* and eventually upon the Catholic schools in Austria, were all an unqualified success. The children in Gross-Deutschland are being brought up in a spirit entirely alien to Christian teaching. They are being taught to worship new and more exciting gods—physical strength, the ability to shoot, army organization and the sublime superiority of their own blood and their own race. Beside these the Catechism is dull stuff. They are even sedulously filled with the idea that any allegiance to the outworn dogmas of Christianity constitutes treason to the Reich.

No-one can foresee the result of this teaching upon the next generation. As has been stressed before, everything depends upon how long the present regime continues. If it can remain for only a few more years, it will have educated an entire people: and there will be a Germany, young, physically magnificent and magnificently sure, that will not sheath the sword until that sword has made the world

its own. This is no timorous exaggeration, but a fact that any visitor to Germany can verify. The children of a nation now nearly 90,000,000 strong are being carefully and most thoroughly brought up to believe that God has sent their Leader here below to redeem the world with weapons. They are told, and they believe, that their life must be built around the conception that they have been born to die for Germany. In order to purify themselves for this last sacrifice they must understand and realize the perfidy of organized religion. That Christ who died upon the Cross was a weakling unworthy of the Nordic faith: they themselves must be Christians who believe in a God who conquered by the sword, who has ordained that by the sword Germany must fulfil her divine mission of Christianizing and purifying the entire world. This is the sincere and unshakable belief of the coming generation in the Third Reich.

. . . . .

3. *The next attack upon organized religion in Germany can only be financial.*

The Reich is hard up for cash. The Church, both in the Alt Reich and in what was Austria, is still rich. Some method will probably be found of absorbing this wealth for purely State purposes.

In the Alt Reich the State has always collected taxes from the Church. Apart from this it has given certain sums every year in lieu of the income

once derived by the Church from property taken over by the State. These State subsidies have slowly been withdrawn, following an announcement by Reichsminister Kerrl on November 30, 1937. All the measures taken in Austria since the Anschluss point to the same conclusion: that legislation is pending whereby the State will arrogate to itself complete control of Church finances, and even possibly disestablish the Church in Germany.

This would actually be welcomed by Catholics throughout the Reich, provided that they had the slightest ground for believing that no legal hindrance would be put in the way of their supporting themselves both the clergy and the churches. Hopes for such freedom are however becoming slighter every day.

Kerrl himself brought attention to the financial figures when in November 1937 he stressed the enormous sums that the Churches receive from the State. He claimed that this amounted to 105 million Marks annually. The Church taxes had amounted to an additional 200 million Marks. Other official sources give the figure paid out to the Church apart from taxes at RM. 63,000,000. As with most questions of this nature it is impossible in modern Germany to obtain figures that are authentic.

All that is certain is that if there is in the near future a further attack upon the Church in Germany, it will probably take a financial form.

4. *Gross-Deutschland* in 1939 offers new and more complicated problems to the leaders of the Third Reich.

With the annexation of Bohemia and Moravia, in addition to that of Austria in 1938, a curious fact emerges.

Kurt Turner, writing in *La Vie Intellectuelle* says: "The annexation has raised the German Catholic population of Greater Germany to about 37,500,000 which means that one tenth of the world's Catholics are now under National-Socialist domination.

"The religious statistics of Hitler's 87,000,000 are as follows:

" 45,000,000 Protestants.

" 37,500,000 Catholics.

" 900,000 other Christians.

" 750,000 Jews.

" 4,350,000 Non-Christians.

"The total territories annexed by Hitler since March 1938, have a population of about 18,000,000, of whom more than 15,000,000 are Catholics."

It is doubtful whether more than 60 per cent. of the members of the Evangelical Church practise their religion: it is therefore more than probable that the greatest practising religion in modern Germany is now not Protestantism but Catholicism.

What will be the effect?

It places upon Catholicism an enormous responsibility, just as it puts before Herr Hitler a tremendous

problem. Dare he now continue to harry a Church become so numerically powerful? It is certain that he will never be able to apply to it the measures that were decided upon against Jewry. But as both he and his followers have not ceased to stress, there are other methods. If he fulfils the threat of his speech made early in 1939, he will divorce the Church from the State: and the Party will appropriate all Catholic Funds. It would mean risking a degree of disunity for the sake of several Marks: but if he were genuinely desperate for cash, the disunity could undoubtedly be dealt with by a campaign in the press against the treachery of the clergy, and the all-important Marks would be his. Only if the subsequent laws were so harsh that they threatened the actual existence of both Protestant and Catholic clergy would he risk revolution: but it is equally sure that such laws would skate around the problem and be promulgated in God's name.

In Germany to-day, the State holds all the cards of material importance: and what is equally important, knows very well how to play them.

That is one of the reasons why the struggle between Church and State, far from being over, may only now start upon its decisive stage.

. . . . .

So far, National-Socialism has won only a single victory over organized religion: and that is in the education of German youth. Since youth is so

important it is easy to predict the eventual downfall of Christianity in the Reich.

And yet . . . National-Socialism is some nine years old.

Christianity—the Christianity of the Old Testament, the story of the Cross—is so much older. It has survived attacks even more curious than this, and will survive greater ones to come. Perhaps it is foolish to worry for a second over its security in the Third Reich. But because its followers there have been made to suffer, because it has been subjected there to humiliations it has not known for generations, because it is the first national attack upon Christ made in God's name, because millions of decent people there have been made to suffer shame for the sake of Jesus—for all these reasons it is essential that some effort should be made to make Christians the world over aware of what is going on in the National-Socialist State.

Protestant and Catholic alike, enjoying the religious freedom of the countries in which they live, owe to their brethren in the torn heart of Germany all the prayers that they can offer for deliverance from the keyhole supervision of a State whose Christianity is not the Christianity of Christ. It may be a long time before the Catholic can send his child to a Catholic school, the Protestant feel himself secure in the practise of his faith. Until then the prayers and sympathy of Christendom should be directed towards

these people now caught in a confusion of conscience combined with strong material threats. Just as the Protestant and the Catholic in the Third Reich find themselves drawn more closely together than ever before, so should members of both denominations in happier lands unite in prayer for those who are suffering in the National-Socialist State.

No temporal power has ever yet smashed the truth or been able to destroy the Faith: and the more that temporal power has relied upon persecution, the more it has been forced towards its own destruction. In the Christianity of the German people, the National-Socialist State has so far found the one enemy that it cannot vanquish. It has been able to laugh at the great democracies and cock a snook at all political ideals. It has been able to tear up the Treaty of Versailles and humiliate the Empire. It has worked miracles among a people defeated in war. It has done a number of magnificent and a number of unpardonable things: in all of them it has been successful, to the mingled wonder and disgust of a stupefied civilization. But so far only one thing has held out successfully against the thunderous resurrection of the Reich: and that is the Sermon on the Mount, and the words "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

One day the Concentration Camps will yield up their dead and the ghosts of Christian Germany will walk again: and the voice of the faithful, no longer



spied upon and hushed, will rise from the Churches of the Reich in praise of that Crucifix which a State attempted to defile. There will be gentians again at the feet of Our Lady, and Protestant and Catholic together will unite in honouring the Man who was not ashamed to die on the Cross for all men, irrespective of Blood and Soil, offering no special discount for Nordic glory. Germany, the true Germany, will return again, even if you and I do not live to see it; and from Oberammergau to the Prussian sea-board the Cross will return to all those rooms where the Swastika now enjoys its black and scarlet splendour.

Germany is one of the greatest countries in the world. Some day it will be true to its heritage again and open its gates to God. Until that day every Christian should pray for the true, the spiritual, resurrection, of the Reich.





